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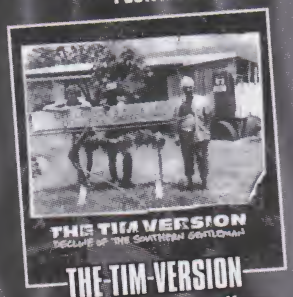

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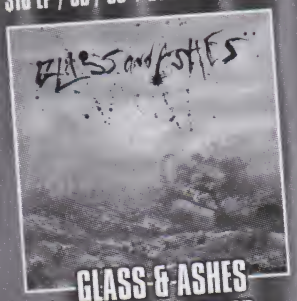

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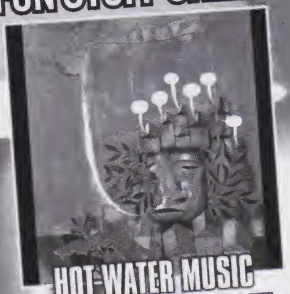

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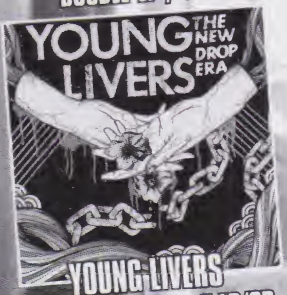

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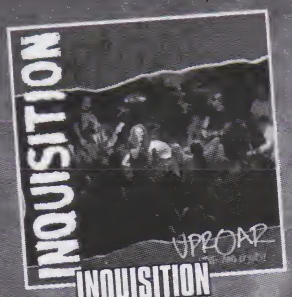

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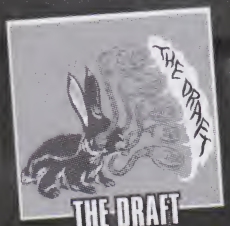

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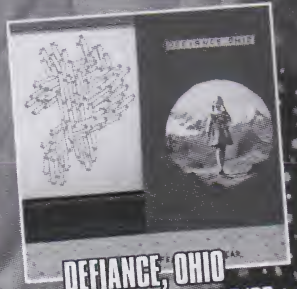

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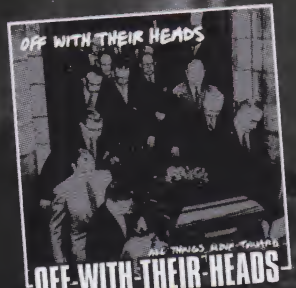

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We're fortunate. In February, our good friends Scott Alcoholocaust and Trey Bundy spearheaded a benefit in San Francisco for us, netting $901 toward a community center in Los Angeles. All monies earned by benefits thrown in our name are going into a separate account that won't be touched until we have enough to properly open a center. We can't tell you when that'll be, but rest assured that not a single cent will be wasted.

We took a gigantic leap of faith with the last issue by ending our relationship with "biggie" magazine distributors. It's a long story, but the relationship was abusive for the off chance that someone would wander into a chain store, bumble into *Razorcake,* and buy a copy. If, by chance, your favorite mom and pop store recently stopped carrying us, please drop us a line. We'll contact them directly and hopefully link them into a system that is much fairer for everyone involved. Alongside the smaller traditional magazine distribution with folks who have been very fair to us, we are currently setting up a program where we donate copies of *Razorcake* to fellow non-profit organizations.

If *you* would like to volunteer to Razorcake, we're looking for help in the following areas: non-profit grant writer, FileMaker Pro wizard, monthly web columnists, PHP-nuke website coders, and website posters.

If you have a job that is updating their equipment, consider asking them to donate the older stuff—a fax machine that uses real paper and doesn't freeze when sending more than two pages, a high-volume photocopier, or a laptop—to Razorcake. We'll send back a tax-deductible receipt.

Contact us via www.razorcake.org if you'd like to help out.

Thank you.

–Todd Taylor

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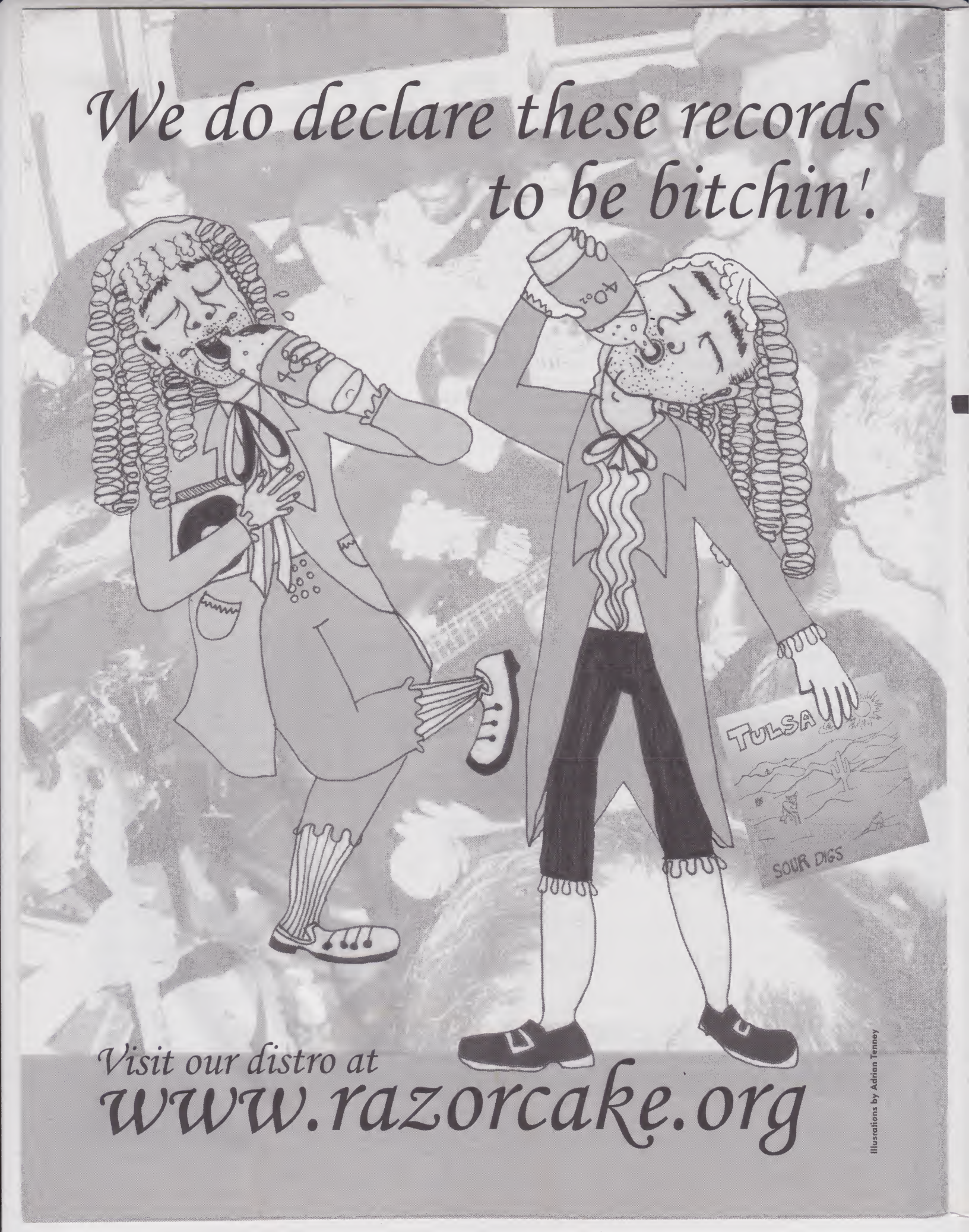
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Illustrations by Adrian Tenney

In It Too Deep

Our fresh young eyes widened at the thought. We were kids when we learned that our largest organ is our skin, a layer of softness that toughened and calloused as we tumble into adults. It matures with us, growing and dying as we shed and create ourselves.

Ten years ago, if someone might have predicted that I would listen to anything that wasn't pop punk, I would have scoffed and turned up my Darlington record. It's been a decade and fine lines have surfaced on my cheeks, my belly has stretched and expanded to accommodate more beer, and tattoos of keepsakes are permanently etched between the layers of dermis that won't flake off.

We grow and evolve, deciding whether we're gonna stick around; if this punk rock thing is a lifelong lifestyle or a nasty rebellious phase. For those of us who are in it for the long haul, cultivating a culture with Top 5 lists and four-track recordings, we allow ourselves to waver a bit and our tastes change. Just as we begrudgingly concede pisswater PBRs to sipping on shots of liquor, we also begin to embrace genres outside of our first stubborn punk rock love.

Leave it to Greg Cartwright to humbly saunter into my Mutant Pop collection with a scuffed-up voice and a heart that's better with wear. Dirty garage rock never suffered from such painful poise and gritty grace. You won't hear Minor Threat or Screeching Weasel in Reigning Sound, but it's still as raw and feverish with beauty in clichés and infinite empathy on a piece of wax.

I've never seen Cartwright play live; my experiences of their shows blare from live records and pixilated video clips. Even as one of my all-time favorite bands, I'm not sure if I would want to see Reigning Sound play. The mythic quality of being able to idolize bands in our scene is severely underrated. There's something about never having gone on a bender with your favorite band, to keep them as artists at bay. Occasionally, we need to be far away and deprive ourselves in order to appreciate what we have in front of us. We need heroes too, these women and men, battered and resilient, as people to aspire to be like. We need this to feel like more than just a few chords strummed together. I'll take it from Cartwright and his impeccable song craftsmanship.

There's hope for the *lifers*. Even as our skin sags and wrinkles, it still tingles all over when we hear something that feels as bright and clear as the moment we stepped into this—realizing that this culture is heavier than a phase. We're in it too deep, having already devoted ourselves to this for so long, and it isn't stubbornness that is keeping us here. We discover and devour because we don't know how to function any other way.

I keep waiting for cynicism to drop in my lap, to walk into a wall of apathy and curse this entire scene—something I did when I was nineteen years old. I renounced punk rock, tired of watching middle-aged white men trying desperately to recapture their youth with spiky hair and button-up shirts covered in hot rod flames. I couldn't understand how I fit into the same subculture until I realized that the beauty of all this is that it didn't matter. It was up to me to decide how to navigate within and own it, a vessel we steer from the inside out. We shape it with what we ingest and mold it with what we create.

It grows all over us, keeping our guts from spilling, protecting and testing our sanity.

–Amy Adoyzie

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"One man scorned and covered with scars still strove with his last ounce of courage to reach the unreachable stars; and the world was better for this."

—Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*

Cover Art Junk by Amy Adoyzie (amyadoyzie.com)

***THANK YOU:** One in the mouth, one behind the ear thanks to Amy Adoyzie for the cover graphictude; You know that Black Flag logo? We've got Raymond Pettibon passed out on our Table of Contents page thanks to Edward Colver for that shot; Urban jungles are filled with bars and animals of a different sort than zoos thanks to Evangelos Christodoulou for his illo in Jim's column; "No, I don't want your autograph" thanks to Gus for his illo in Amy's column; I hate my fuckin' job, I hate my fuckin' job, woooah-oooh-ohhh thanks to Kiyoshi Nakazawa for his illo in Gary's column; Lady justice is blind, but does she have to be so disorganized? thanks to Maynard for his illo in Dale's column; What we have now is a goddamn, full-flight conspiracy: which came first the chicken or the bunny? thanks to Steve Larder for his illo in the Rhythm Chicken's column; Levels of purgatory should all include the dickweed playing a Def Leppard medley thanks to Ryan Gelatin for his illo in Nørb's column; Weird Al totally weirded out Nardwuar, which is weird thanks to Mitch Clem for his illo in Nardwuar's column; The illustration says "Tits," and if you get bent out of shape, read the column before writing the nasty letter to the editor we won't print thanks to Brad Beshaw for his illustration in Sean's column; East L.A. Occidentalism thanks to Jimmy Alavarado for his Los Illegals interview; Fingers crossed, I hope we got the Diane Gamboa credit right (her number was changed); Musical proficiency is way overrated (dirt should be dirty, not clean) thanks to Ryan Leach, Mor Fleisher, Uri Garcia, and Tiger Lily for their respective and considerable skills with the Reigning Sound interview; Tony Adolescent's such a nice guy. Thanks for his help with the Edward Colver interview; Front flip into an unsuspecting crowd thanks to Lauren Measure for her Edward Colver layout; Suzy Shaw really does make the world's best lemon bars thanks to Namella J. Kim and Dave Disorder for their help with the Bomp! interview; A tip of the Photoshop wizard cap to Chris Baxter for making us look pretty; When you ask, "Hey, can you download our shit on your own electronic device and provide us with free feedback?" (thus shredding the social contract between artist and critic of the past three hundred years) a little piece of the following record, book, and zine reviewers dies: Corrine, Keith Rosson, Stevo, Mike Frame, Dave Williams, Kurt Morris, Dave Dillon, Donda-da-dunt-da-don, Adrian Salas, Joe Evans III, Aphid Peewit, Sean Koepenick, Mike Faloon, Ty Stranglehold, Speedway Randy, Will Kwiatkowski, Bryan Static, Jimmy Alvarado, Lord Kveldulfr, Art Ettinger, MP Johnson, Dave Disorder, Sarah Shay, Josh Benke, Craven Rock, Nick Toerner, Vincent, Tim Jamison, Todd's Mom, Lauren Trout, and Jenny Moncayo; Davey Quinn, Megan Pants, and Kurt Morris are effectively turning into our review section editors. Like, they take all the files and make some important decisions and stuff, but mastheads are dumb; Good riddance to dastardly stairs thanks to Stacy Smilanick, Donofgoodtimes, and Chris Devlin for their big mailout help.*

This issue is dedicated to the birth of Lily Average.

Douchebag Devin.

If you're dumb/smart enough to get a Razorcake tattoo, that equals a free lifetime bulk sub.*

* Americans not in jail, only. World and prisoners, we blame the postage (and society).

*If you move and don't send in a forwarding address, it's over.

*Don't be cute in Photoshop, either. Real tattoos only.

*If we start suckin', it'll still be on you. Just something to think about.

*No, getting a Razorcake tattoo won't give your band a better review. Jimmy hates everything.

*Getting a "Fuck You, Dale" would be pretty rad, though.

*Offer good until 1/01/09. We don't want to Rocket From The Crypt ourselves, but if response is reasonable, we'll probably renew the offer.

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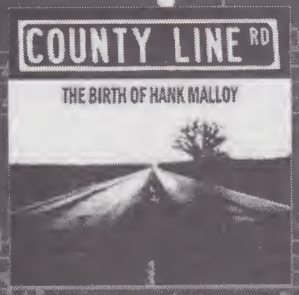

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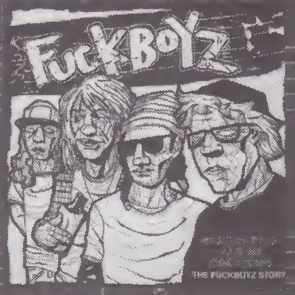

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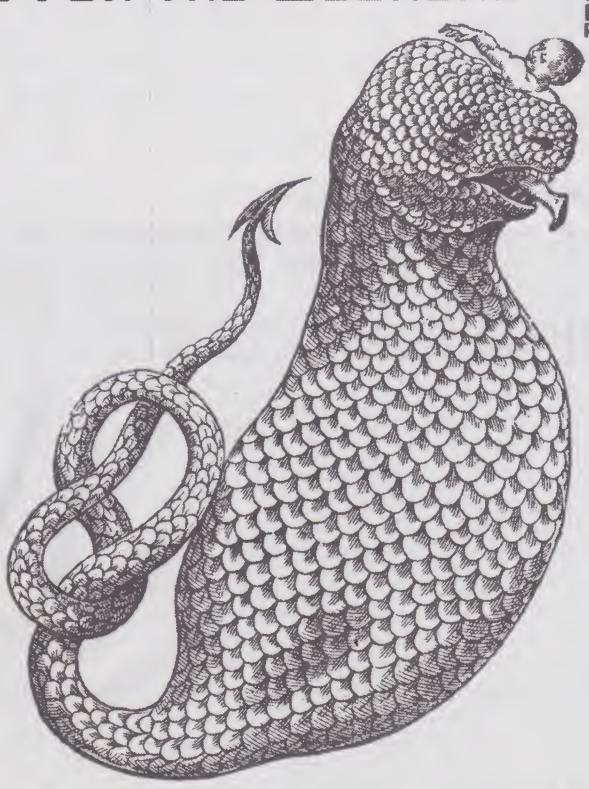

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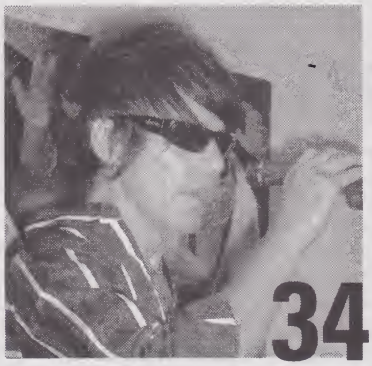

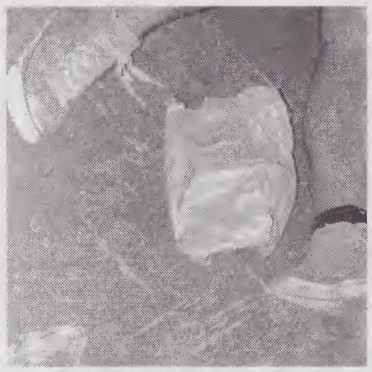

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"At Ron Paul functions, the tightening noose around the American populace is always a topic of conversation"

Ron Paul Evolution

"At first, I was so charged that there was a man who was running for the American presidency who embodied 99% of my belief system. All I could think was that we need to elect this guy or bust. It was Ron Paul or nothing," says Juliet Annerino. "I spent the first two or three months of my involvement in the campaign with that single-minded, laser beam mentality. I think that's good, but now, I think that it's better—from my point of view it's more healthy—to take a step back and see that the potential of this movement is bigger than Ron Paul."

Annerino, who organized the Rock for Ron Paul event at L.A. nightclub Safari Sam's and created the Hotties for Ron Paul Calendar campaign, is just one of many grassroots activists who took to the Information Highway and good ol' fashioned streets in support of a Republican from Texas nearly eight years after another Republican from Texas began the charge towards hell in a handbasket. But Dr. Paul, an obstetrician and member of the House of Representatives who famously opposed both the Iraq invasion and the Patriot Act, isn't George W. Bush. Likewise, his supporters aren't who you might expect from a campaign involving little red elephants. Over the course of six months, I attended five Ron Paul events and, while the crowd grew significantly larger as the primaries came closer, the group of supporters was consistently similar in its odd mix of hippies, punks, college kids, professionals, retirees and, yes, even rocket scientists. On the surface, it seemed as though these few hundred folks would have nothing in common, but they did. They wanted change.

"I think there are a lot of people who didn't have a voice and I think that [Paul] is that voice for a lot of people," says Nikki, an electronic artist who performed at the Rock for Ron Paul event.

It's not hard to feel disenfranchised in the U.S., not when the power of special interest groups often trumps the power of constituents and mainstream news is more interested in star power than significant issues. And for those who feel that something just isn't right in the States, Paul has provided a sense of hope, not with mere rhetoric but with ideas and action. And as a cursory browse through the House of Representatives website will indicate, Paul's voting record has consistently been in line with the ideas he has espoused throughout his campaign: foreign policy based on trade, not military intervention; less bureaucracy at the Federal level; and increased personal liberty.

I attended my first Ron Paul event, a rally in front of a taping of *Real Time with Bill Maher*, on May 25, 2007. It was a spur-of-the-moment decision, based primarily on the fact that I happened to be interviewing someone at a hotel less than a mile away and had both a recorder and spare tapes on hand. The gathering, I would later learn, was organized a mere twenty-four hours before the show by the Studio City/North Hollywood Ron Paul Meetup group, which had officially formed four days earlier.

Given the impromptu organization of both the group and the meeting, it would have been a surprise if one person other than the facilitator appeared. In fact, there were roughly fifty people in attendance, all vocal and all waving oversized, homemade signs in front of the car windows edging down Fairfax Boulevard. On the sidelines stood a strangely preppy documentary filmmaker who decided to take a tally of the supporters and their political affiliations. I glanced over the list and noticed a large number of independent voters, a handful of registered Republicans and Libertarians, and a smattering of Democrats and Greens. Even in the campaign's earliest stages, the Paulites were hard to pigeonhole.

During the rally, I spoke with Don Moony, a San Fernando Valley resident with a reformed Deadhead look to him. Moony described himself as fairly conservative, but not a right-winger, with a keen interest in observing the guidelines set forth by the Constitution. For Moony, like many of the other people I met in the months leading up to Super Tuesday, Paul's stance on war was one of the politician's selling points.

"Everyone else is like, 'Let's go over to the Middle East and kick some more butt,'" he says before somberly dropping his voice to add, "There's too much fear, so much fear."

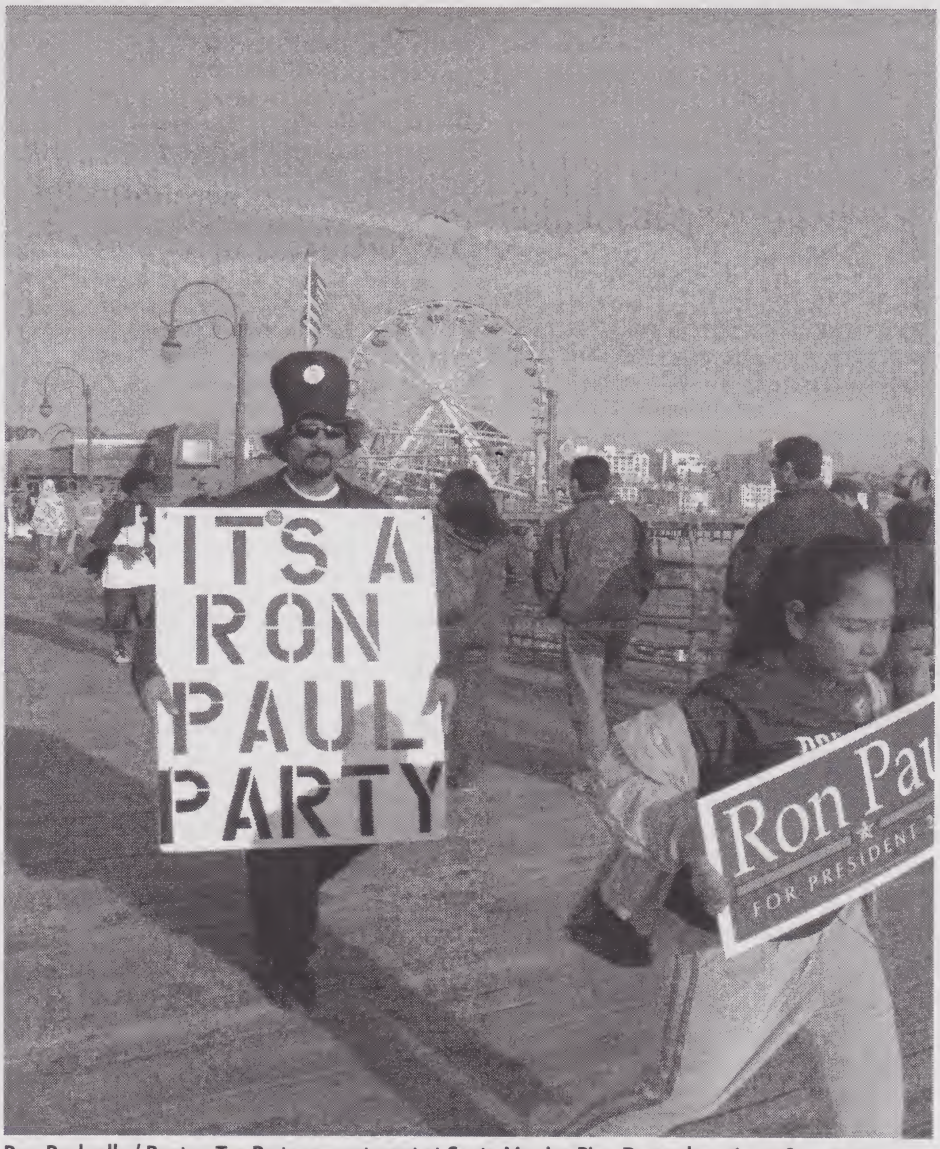
In the six years that have passed since 9/11, we have become a nation crippled by fear. A war on a tactic—terrorism—morphed into a war against a country—Iraq—that has claimed more American lives than the World Trade Center attacks, not to mention the lives of our allies and Iraqi citizens. Back on the home front, the government's flagrant disregard for civil liberties has become an accepted way of life. No-fly lists and wire-tapping are just fine. Thought-policing is a-okay too. Just read through H.R. 1955, the "Prevention of Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism" bill that was sponsored by Representative Jane Harman (D- California) and passed through the House with bipartisan support. Per the bill, violent radicalization is defined as "the process of adopting or promoting an extremist belief system for the purpose of facilitating ideologically based violence to advance political, religious, or social change," and Congress hopes to halt that by establishing a national commission to work with law enforcement agencies. Placed in the wrong hands, this bill could adversely affect anyone who has ever professed an interest in Emma Goldman, the Black Panthers, or the Weathermen.

But, you know, it's for the good of the State.

These are the things you don't hear on the evening news, but, at Ron Paul functions, the tightening noose around the American populace is always a topic of conversation. Many a political pundit has twisted this need to question authority into a sign that Paulites are a bunch of crackpots. I won't lie, while conversing with a few of the participants, some of the discussions verged close to conspiracism (and, to be fair, not everyone involved with the Paul campaign is a budding consipracist). At first, I was taken aback, wondering what kind of story I was chasing, until I asked myself what is a democracy without conspiracy theories? I might think that our government is far too inept to fake a moon landing or devise the 9/11 attacks and keep it secret for more than a half-hour,

The government's flagrant disregard for civil liberties has become an accepted way of life.

No-fly lists and wire-tapping are just fine. Thought-policing is a-okay too.



Ron Paul rally / Boston Tea Party reenactment at Santa Monica Pier, December 16, 2008 Photo by Liz O.

but asking those questions is exercising our right to free speech. And, if we all were to take every official government statement at face value, we might as well be marching in formation on the White House lawn and referring to Bush as the Great Leader.

Perhaps the mainstream's flippant attitude towards Paul and his supporters is why a candidate who believes we could stay in Iraq for another century is, at press time, the Republican frontrunner. Online, Ron Paul is a superstar. Google search Meetup and his page is listed third, right behind two links to the social networking site's main page. Per the website, there are 1,603 Ron Paul Meetup groups spanning across 1,186 cities in thirty-two countries. Conversely, there are seven John McCain Meetup groups in seven cities located in one country. Through Meetup, as well as networks like MySpace and Facebook, news traveled quickly. Money bombs—designated donation days, often tied in with significant events like Guy Fawkes Day—generated over twelve million dollars for the campaign. On December 16, the anniversary of the Boston Tea Party, hundreds marched across the Santa Monica Pier, many dressed like the Sons of Liberty, and proceeded to dump (okay, pretended to dump) cases of tea into the Pacific Ocean. Still more Paulites congregated at meeting halls and private homes to write letters to fellow voters and headed out to shopping centers for electioneering sessions. And then there were those who engaged in freeway blogging by hanging signs from L.A.'s many overpasses. Driving in traffic on a daily basis, I was hit by constant reminders of Ron Paul, whether they were posters along the 405, signs on Ventura Boulevard, or stickers on the SUV next to me. This organic, web-based aspect of the campaign certainly lived up to the motto: Ron Paul Revolution.

With that in mind, it was unsettling to see the results from the California primaries, where Paul earned 4 percent of the votes, less than Rudy Giuliani, a fact made stranger by the facts that a) Giuliani had already dropped out of the race and b) Paul beat Giuliani in a number of the earlier primaries. But if I thought of this as a loss, I would be just as short-sighted as the authoritative figures that brushed him off in the first place. Ron Paul, the doctor from Texas whose love of liberty labeled him a fringe candidate, outlasted over-hyped candidates Giuliani and Fred Thompson and even McCain's fiercest competition, Mitt Romney. Ultimately, Paul did something much greater than run a presidential campaign.

On a campaign-related photo album hosted by Flickr, one Paulite stands in the middle of an indoor basketball court, holding a sign that reads, "Dr. Ron Paul cured my apathy." Judging from the people I met during the course of the campaign, this isn't an isolated sentiment. Paul inspired a legion of disillusioned Americans to take political matters into their own hands, to get out on the streets, and actually work for change. The Revolution evolved and, no matter how the 2008 presidential election ends, there will be a new wave of activists championing peace and freedom.

"The message is bigger than him," says Annerino. "We're not electing him to be king. There is more to a government than the presidency."

–Liz Ohanesian

"Zoos are like wedding registries and bail bondsmen. You never think about them until you need them."

On the Other Side of the Bars

Zoos are weird.

You take a bunch of wild animals out of their natural habitats and stick them inside of cages. Some large animals get enclosures. Smaller animals are put in cells, some no bigger than a terrarium. But a cage is a cage is a cage. All of the interesting stuff—eating, reproducing, birthing, dying—occurs back stage and out of sight. The animals don't do anything. They just sit there and rot.

Like suckers, we pay for the privilege to watch them not doing anything. We go from cage to cage, ooh-ing and aah-ing and taunting the animals with our overpriced popcorn. And when the animals don't pay attention to us, we tap on the glass and demand that they do something interesting.

When you get down to it, zoos pretty much suck from top to bottom. So why do we enjoy taking our children there?

It really doesn't make any sense. For the last fifty years, kids have been raised on a diet of amazing animals doing amazing things. And where do these amazing animals do these amazing things? In their natural habitat.

Disney has been churning out cartoons designed to provoke the primal fear of being separated from one's parents. That much is a given. From *Dumbo* to *Finding Nemo* the story is pretty much the same: an amazing animal lives in near-perfect harmony with its amazing parents. Then humans enter the picture and fuck everything up. From a three-year-old's point-of-view, *Bambi* isn't all that different from *Friday the 13th*.

But when we take our kids to the zoo, we're banking on them not making the connection that the zookeepers are the bad guys. In a few years they'll wise up and figure out how lame the zoo is. Until then, lions! Pandas! Four-dollar soft drinks!

I've been spending a lot of time at the zoo lately. It comes with the territory of being a parent. When you're in your twenties, you can drive by the zoo every day without thinking about it. Those acres of lands parceled out to the zoo might as well not even be there.

But all that changes when you become a parent. Zoos are like wedding registries and bail bondsmen. You never think about them until you need them, and then when you do all of the sudden you see them everywhere, quietly going about their secret business.

For the last few years I've been making semi-regular visits to the Los Angeles Zoo. One of my oldest friends in L.A. is also a relatively new parent and I'm the godfather to his son and my daughter and I tag along on their trips to the zoo. Nate has a family pass so we sneak in as one big ~~homo~~ alternative-lifestyle family.

Nate is a zoo pro. He's got the park more or less memorized. That may not seem like a big deal, but when it's the middle afternoon and the temperature is in the nineties and your little angel wants to see giraffes, Nate knows exactly how to get there.

Nate is always super-prepared with a backpack full of snacks, juice, water, and handy wipes. It's a proven fact that over half of all kid-related disasters can be taken care of with the quick application of a handy wipe.

When we went to the zoo the week before the Super Bowl, Nate had uncharacteristically left his backpack at home—but not the handy wipes. Nate never goes anywhere without a box of handy wipes—and for once I got to out-dad Nate. Nate's been at this for a few years longer than I have and has considerably more experience in the child-raising arena than I do, so these moments don't come around too often.

In fact, it's a miracle that they come around at all. It seemed like not too long ago that Nate and I were the least likely candidates for fatherhood in all of L.A. We brought out the worst in each other. Whenever Nate and I got together, good judgment would go flying out the window, which was scary because we lived together.

We weren't merely reckless. We wore our recklessness like a badge of honor. Getting thrown out of bars. Chugging pints of vodka. Driving cars without a license, registration, insurance, plates, or brakes. Then there was the time we went out for a beer run on a motorcycle. We only had one helmet so one of us wore a stainless steel mixing bowl.

Do I need to go on?

Nate likes to get an early start and beat the crowds. The zoo opens at 10AM and when I rolled up shortly afterward, late as usual, Nate and his son were waiting for me outside the zoo's western entrance.

It had rained the night before and the forecast called for more, so there was hardly anyone there. Just a handful of tourists, some hardy hipsters, and our faux homo family.

The pathways were littered with wet leaves stuck to the pavement. The flora felt damp, almost lush. It felt like a place where animals would live, with or without the cages. Many of the exhibits were closed. Either because of the rain that had fallen or the rain people told us would come. Most of the cats, both big and small, were inside and their empty cages seemed sadder somehow without any animals in it.

The storm kept some of the vendors away, including the ladies who sell the roasted glazed nuts. They're teeth-crackingly hard and impossibly sweet, but damn are they good. Especially on a wet winter morning with a chill on the air. I wasn't sure what I missed more: the nuts or the jokes that went with them:

"Would you like some more of my warm nuts?" Nate would ask. "Do my nuts taste salty today?"

These jokes never get old.

At the alligator pit, we stumbled upon one of the strangest scenes I've ever witnessed at the zoo.

Because of all the debris that had fallen into the alligator pen, the pit had been completely drained, leaving a layer of leaves and branches on the bottom of the tank and one enormous alligator.

I couldn't get over the size of the thing. It was black and jowly and well over ten feet long. It looked positively prehistoric. It was missing chunks of flesh from its fat fingers from fights with the other alligator, which the zookeeper explained was hiding under a fake island. It was the kind of alligator that one could easily imagine with a clock ticking away inside its belly.

Then the zookeeper did something astonishing. He climbed into the tank and started to rake the leaves.

Nate and I looked at one another. Was it possible he forgot there was a live, ten-foot-long alligator in there?

The alligator perked up. It sat up on its haunches and opened its mouth a little. The zookeeper scraped his rake across the cement floor of the tank and gathered up the leaves. Sometimes the zookeeper had his back completely turned to the alligator. It was either the bravest or stupidest thing I've ever seen.

A small crowd formed at the pit to watch the alligator watch the zookeeper clean up the tank.

"He has to know we're standing here," Nate said, "because secretly we all want to see the alligator get him."

Illustration by Evangelos Christodoulou

A cage is a cage is a cage.

I nodded.

"When it happens, I'll watch the kids while you rescue him."

The Nate I used to know would have wanted to jump in the tank and take out the alligator. Hell, the old Nate would have already taken out his knife. I once watched Nate free climb at Point Dume. He has a hunger and thirst for adventure like no one else I've ever met. It would be easy to say that Nate has changed, but I don't think he has. His circumstances have dramatically changed, but underneath he's the same old outlaw—an outlaw who loves his son. People with children who depend on them don't turn their back on ten-foot alligators.

Nate joked with the zookeeper, said he hoped he'd tossed the alligator a few chickens before he climbed in there. The zookeeper didn't look particularly happy about the situation. He finished his job and climbed out of the tank without incident.

Before we left, did we joke about throwing our children into the alligator pit? Did we tell them how tasty they looked? How nicely they'd fit inside that alligator's belly?

Of course we did.

Are we terrible parents?

Probably.

But after teasing our kids, we reassured them that we would never do such a thing, that we would protect them from all the alligators, lions, and bears in the world. Then we picked them up and carried them in our arms and held them close so that they would feel with their own beating hearts the depth of our devotion.

Then we climbed into our gas-burning cages and drove back to our suburban enclosures.

–Jim Ruland

"The stone revealed an unbelievably poorly written book that Mark Twain would later call 'chloroform in print'."

And So It Came to Pass!

Greetings Razorcakers and Razorcakettes! Quiz time! Do you know what's one of the least punk things of all time? Religion! And do you know what's one of the most punk things of all time? Stealing! So, what happens when you steal...*The Book of Mormon*?! Furthermore, what happens when you take that book (and others) and attempt to create a Top Ten Most Bizarre Things About Mormonism? Combining the hallowed and very punk rock top ten list with Mitt Romney? What's next? Pogoing to Limp Bizkit?

Yes, what follows is a (not very) in-depth exploration of one of the more bizarre religions to gain (some) mainstream acceptance! Of course, Mormonism has been in the news lately, but your local paper has only skimmed the surface. We all know about polygamy already, and, frankly, that might be among the lesser oddities of Mormonism. Most of us even know that Mormons like to baptize people after they die, including (although they stopped this recently due to public outcry) "baptizing" Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Thankfully, we will go much beyond these well-trodden matters because your kind writer is a.) a total dork with too much time on her hands, b.) obsessed with dumb (all) religions, and c.) fully caffeinated and alternately rocking out to Jay Reatard and Screeching Weasel's *My Brain Hurts*! Alright! Without further ado, I bring you...

The Top Ten Most Bizarre Things About Mormonism!

1. Whereas the Bible was passed on over many generations, the *Book of Mormon* was discovered buried in a hill! Joseph Smith was living in western New York in the 1820s—having been recently charged with fraud after claiming he could locate valuable objects with a "seer stone"—when he was visited by the angel Moroni. The angel told him that gold tablets were buried in a hill near his house about 1,400 years ago, but warned Joseph not to dig them up. Unfortunately, Mr. Smith couldn't help himself, and started digging. When he found the tablets, they immediately disappeared! Fortunately, the angel told Joseph that he would return every September 22nd, and if he was lucky, he would eventually get the tablets. In 1827, Joseph got lucky (after Moroni told him he would give Joseph the tablets if he married his girlfriend!), and the tablets were his!

2. But there's more! These were no ordinary golden tablets buried in Western New York! No, these were written in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics. How was poor Joseph going to be able to read them? At first glance, this appeared as likely as Ms. Tight Pants understanding the lyrics to a grindcore song. Fortunately, the angel Moroni gave Joseph magical eyeglasses (again, seriously!), and he got to work deciphering right away! Sadly, after all that work, his friend LOST the tablets! For shame! Luckily, Moroni gave them back, but decided not to give back the glasses, which apparently had also been lost. (You'd think that you'd take better care of THE WORD OF GOD and your MAGIC EYEGLASSES, but I digress.) So, Joseph took his old "seer stone," and used that to interpret the mysterious writings. Yes, a stone revealed the word of God! In *Under the Banner of Heaven* (an amazing book about Mormonism by the equally amazing Jon Krakauer), Krakauer writes, "Day after day... Joseph would place the magic rock in an upturned hat, bury his face in it with the stack of gold plates sitting nearby, and dictate the lines of scripture that appeared to him out of the blackness." The stone revealed an unbelievably poorly written book that Mark Twain would later call "chloroform in print" because of its soporific qualities, pointing out that it (seriously) contains the phrase "and so it came to pass" over 2,000 times in its 531 pages.

3. But, you ask (or I ask on your behalf), "Magic glasses and secret stones are interesting and everything, but what is the *Book of Mormon* all about, anyway?" Thank you, dear reader, for asking! *The Book of Mormon* tells the story of ancient Hebrews, led by their, um, leader, Lehi, who traveled to North America by boat about six hundred years before Jesus was born. When it came time to decide who would replace Lehi, a bitter battle erupted between Lehi's sons, Nephi and Laman. God decided that the followers of Laman (creatively known as the Lamanites) were evil, and, consequently, "The skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression and their rebellion against their brethren." Yes, you read that correctly! God made the Lamanites black because they were naughty! (Interestingly and bizarrely enough, Mormons believe that the Lamanites are the ancestors of Native Americans.) Consequently, blacks were not allowed into the Mormon Church until 1978.

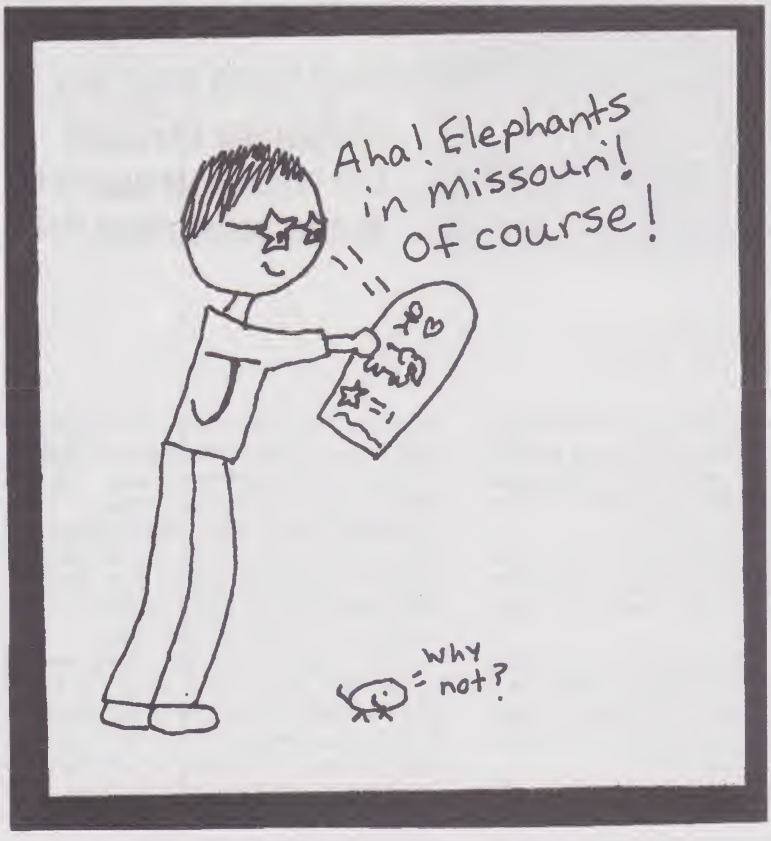
4. Around 400 A.D. a huge civil war erupted and all 230,000 Nephites (guided by their leader, Mormon) were mercilessly killed by the evil, black Lamanites. Mormons say that this explains why Columbus didn't find any white people when he arrived in the New World. A few Nephites were left, and resorted, unsuccessfully, to cannibalism before dying in the wilderness. Anthropologists dispute these and other historical details, pointing out that there's no evidence of the murder of hundreds of thousands of people in prehistoric times. Additionally, although the *Book of Mormon* claims that elephants lived with the Nephites, this has shockingly been disproved by godless archaeologists.

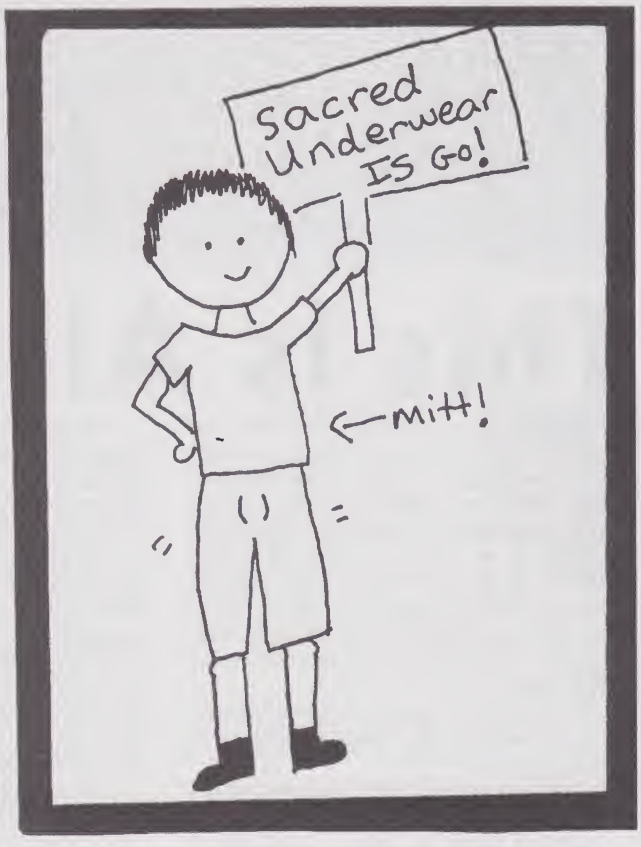
5. The *Book of Mormon* contains the most ridiculous religious name of all time. In the second book of Nephi, God tells the prophet Isaiah to name his son Mathershalalhashaz. Seriously.

6. After Joseph Smith was murdered, Brigham Young gave a speech that would make him the new president of the Mormon Church because, while giving the speech, Brigham grew several inches taller, and assumed the appearance and voice of Joseph Smith.

7. Brigham Young's successor, John Taylor, knew he was destined to lead the church when, while shaking hands with Brigham, he felt an electric current run up his arm.

8. In 1857, Brigham Young and his followers were living out West when, after a series of skirmishes with the federal government, they happened across a group of travelers from Arkansas known as the Fancher Party. The Mormons, hearing about the expensive animals and other goods the Fanchers were toting, and having overheard that one of the Fanchers had previously killed a Mormon, decided to attack! After killing 120 travelers, including fifty children, only seventeen kids





In other words, the best way to praise the Lord is to wear really unfashionable underwear.

remained, all under the age of five. The Mormons did what was reasonable; took the children home and raised them in the families responsible for killing their parents. Kind! The government, thinking this a bit strange, intervened two years later, and forced the Mormons to return the kids to their relatives. The Mormons relented, but not before demanding to be reimbursed for room and board. Seriously!

9. Catholics wear crucifixes; Jews wear yarmulkes; Mormons wear... sacred undergarments! Called "temple garments," this holy underwear is believed to provide protection against evil. These Satan-busting linens basically look like a pair of white shorts reaching down to the knees and a T-shirt. Yes, the Mormons wear clothes under their clothes! The Mormon Church released a statement in 1988, declaring, "The fundamental principle ought to be to wear the garment and not to find occasions to remove it. Thus, members should not remove either all or part of the garment to work in the yard or to lounge around the home in swimwear or immodest clothing. Nor should they remove it to participate in recreational activities that can reasonably be done with the garment worn properly beneath regular clothing. When the garment must be removed, such as for swimming, it should be restored as soon as possible." Amen! One Mormon elder explains, "Wearing the garment is an outward expression of an inward commitment to follow the Savior." In other words, the best way to praise the Lord is to wear really unfashionable underwear. Sadly, the official underwear cannot be purchased online or in stores, so I have been denied my God-given right to mock another religion. Interestingly, presidential candidate Mitt Romney has been questioned about whether he wears the temple garments by the *Atlantic Monthly*, to which he replied, "I'll just say those sorts of things I'll keep private."

10. Mormons believe that you can't get into heaven without knowing four secret handshakes. Once you are formally received into the Mormon temple, you are taught the handshakes so that you can shake hands with God in a certain pattern when you're at the entrance to the "celestial kingdom."

Other beliefs that I've heard of, but sadly could not confirm (yes, I do employ some basic fact-checking measures!) include the beliefs that: Satan has control of the Earth's water; dinosaur fossils were formed by Satan to deceive people into thinking that the Earth is older than biblically possible; God lives on a planet or star called Kolob; and, believers become the god of their own planet after they die. Let's just go ahead and assume that all of these are also true.

So there you have it! I know that all religions are ridiculous (I am actually currently embarking on reading the Bible from cover to cover, and there's some gems in there), but there's something about thinking that the Garden of Eden was located in Jackson County, Missouri, that truly stretches the imagination. I say that, if you're going to believe in a religion, which is essentially, by its nature, irrational, it makes sense to believe in the most ridiculous one possible. Now, while Mormons aren't exactly the Moonies, they still easily beat out mainstream Christianity in the ridiculosity department. Joseph Smith, I salute you!

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, you can now successfully bring up Mormonism at your next punk rock show! I know that there are always those awkward moments in between bands where you stand around and try to look cool and pretend like you didn't go to the show by yourself. Now you can approach your fellow punk and say, "There's a little story about some magic eyeglasses that I'd like to tell you." Punk rock!

–Maddy

P.S. Check out the very interesting zine written by an ex-Mormon, entitled *I Was a Teenage Mormon* (available through Microcosm Publishing, microcosmpublishing.com) for more ridiculosity!

"Our band was too simple to fail and we were too naïve to doubt ourselves."

This Is All

This thing we do with ourselves, the sleepless nights filled with revelry or bright days of abysmal routine, is something we chose. Empty bank accounts and beer cans. Losing hearing and inhibitions. The floors we wake up on and the people with whom we share couches. We chose it. We picked the crooked paths and merrily skip along in our worn shoes and exhausted spirits. But, at the very least, we decided we wanted this on our own volition.

We determine when half-formed inside jokes and bad ideas become solid projects in which we pour our lives.

I had had a couple beers and was brazen with declaratives.

"We're going on tour!" I announced to Gus.

"Shut the fuck up."

"Up and down the coast. A week. It'll be awesome!" I beamed, hoping my enthusiasm would outshine his dismissal.

"How about we play a show first?" Gus reasoned. "And we should have more than, you know, two songs."

Try as he might, but practicalities and logistics weren't going to convince me otherwise. Our two-week old band would plan to go on tour before we'd even played our first show. Maybe this was a lofty goal for a group that began as a fake band with silly tracks cut on my laptop. Maybe it was a bit ambitious, considering neither of us had ever driven more than an hour to perform in any of our other bands. Maybe we should play a show first.

* * * * *

"Can you be a little more erotic?!"

In the book of heckles, this one wasn't that bad.

I turned to Gus and asked, "Did he just…?"

"Yeah," Gus said. "Can you turn up the eroticism by about fifteen percent?"

We squinted at the dark corner where three overweight middle-aged men sat against the back wall marinating in their drunkenness and confusing me for an exotic dancer. A couple songs later, one of them asked, "Can you slow it down? I'm getting a headache."

Gus and I looked at each other, shrugged and played as fast as Gus's fingers could move.

During our first show, in a north Portland basement, a confused punk kid in a studded leather jacket and ripped tight black jeans swayed his way to the front to ask, "Where are the *real* drums and guitar?!"

He felt duped. Like our Casiotone beats and Gus's bass cranked through an overdrive pedal was a sham. Like we were caught counterfeiting.

Maybe we were. Maybe it was bogus with just a girl shout-singing, a dude on a four-string instrument, and rhythmic thumps piped out of a keyboard that was older than some of the kids at that show.

But it worked. Because somehow two best friends and a touch of misanthropy made it so that we were solid with it just being the two of us. It worked so well that we were able to accomplish more in our mere four months than many bands do in their entire life spans. Our band was too simple to fail and we were too naïve to doubt ourselves.

It helped that I lived under the same roof with Gus and his wife, Marah. On practice days, I rolled out of bed, had a bowl of cereal, made coffee, and knocked on Marah and Gus's bedroom door. A half hour later, after Gus finished his morning pooping and cigarette-smoking ritual, we would still be in our pajamas in the basement writing new songs about optimism and the same old shit.

Gus named the band. I agreed to it because it was ridiculous and I never thought we'd play outside of the basement. China Loca, phonetically pronounced cheena loca, is Spanish meaning crazy Chinese girl.

Some epic schemes begin as benign farces that eventually morph into monsters that we no longer own. China Loca began as a joke laptop band, with songs featuring animal growls and about dancing until your pants fell off. As someone who is self-conscious about being self-conscious, being in a band named after my kookiness was an exercise in acceptance of my own neurotic awareness. I hope that someday Gus will get his comeuppance and play in a band called The Asshole White Guys or The Queers or something.

* * * * *

"What's the matter with you?" Gus asked after he noticed the sour look on my face.

"I've got tour guilt." My eyes wandered across the ten-lane freeway, five heading south and five going north. Our tiny Tercel sped along, fenced in by a pack of hulking SUVs, as five-bedroom tract housing spread across the suburban landscape. I was surrounded by so much wealth, mortgage loans, and credit card debt. We were fueling the car with gasoline derived from hundred-dollar barrels of oil, lazily hanging our feet over the lip of first-world privilege.

"Get over it." That's Gus's latest mantra.

"It's just that I think about the kids I used to teach." More than 1,300 teenagers in Huarong, Hunan, China. It is the type of small Chinese town that's lost amidst rapid development and globalization, where folks still hang portraits of Mao in their storefronts and donkey-drawn carts idle along with traffic in the four-square-block center of town.

"The idea of being a twenty-seven-year-old dishwasher slash record store clerk, *touring* with her band and not having to worry about helping to feed my family or any other obligations outside of all the dumb shit I choose to do. This idea would be so foreign to my kids. Like, people *do* this?"

"Yeah, we're doing it. Stop feeling bad about it."

"Just lemme feel bad about for another five minutes."

Three months into China Loca, and we were on our first day of tour. Hours later, we landed in San Jose, California where we played at a roller rink packed with middle-schoolers at the imaginatively-named San Jose Skate.

"I had to sign a contract saying that I wouldn't swear or make any references to drugs and alcohol," I told Gus before loading in.

"You did what?"

"Or else we can't play."

"You signed what?" Gus was flabbergasted and shook his head, but was soon appeased when he learned that our wristbands would grant us a cup of pop and free skates.

We cut out an entire song, replaced words in others in order to avoid saying things that kids hear everyday on the playground. Max, Bob, and a friend stood up front and applauded my banter about how our songs are about being grounded or getting an A on your book report.

"This song's about how girls should stop watching their long-haired boyfriends play guitar and play guitars themselves."

Max and Bob said that they heard two young teenage girls gasp, "I do that."

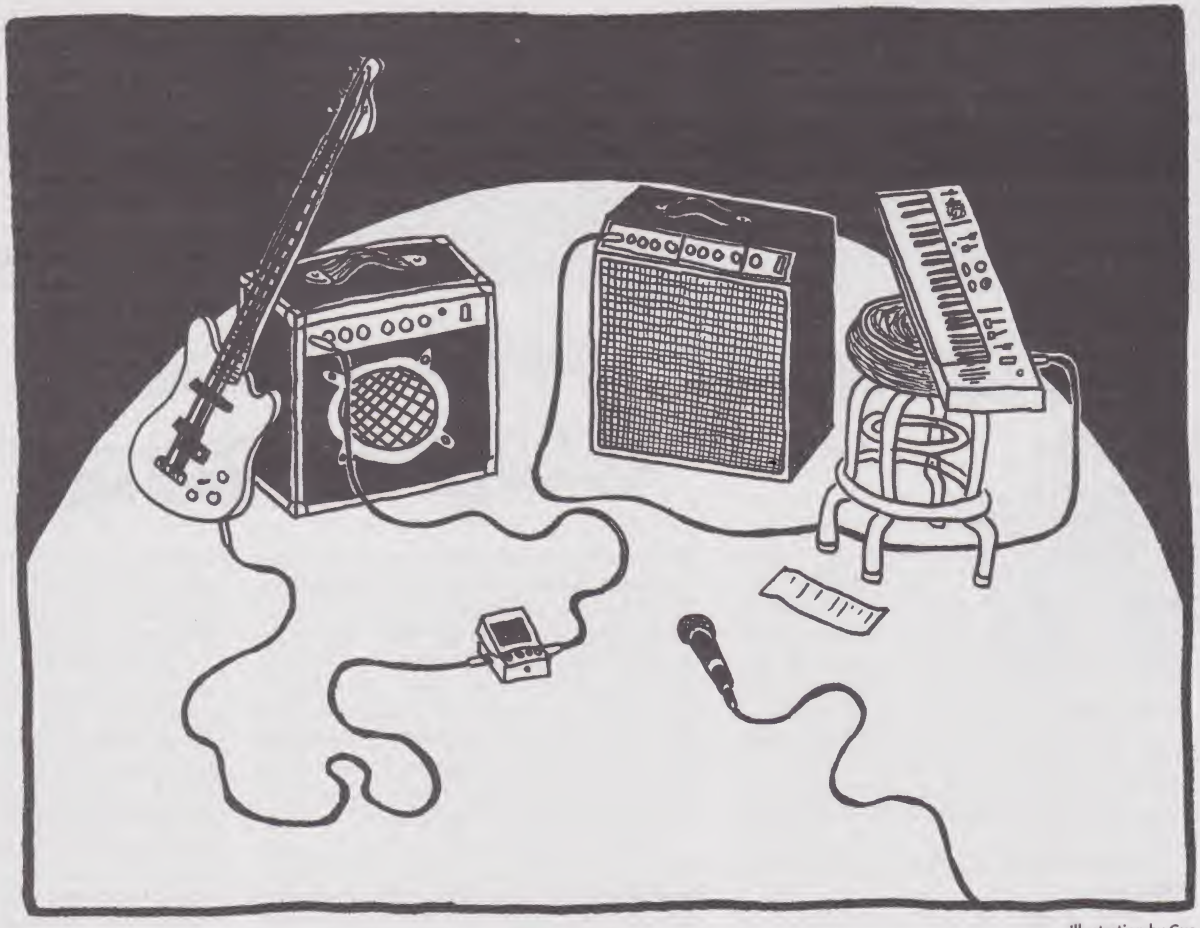


Illustration by Gus

"This is how we roll," "And we roll hard."

Even with all the dirty looks from hesher high school boys and the censorship, that show was one of my favorites. When's the last time you saw two kids dressed up as a banana and a brown dog wail on each other in the middle of a roller rink?

We've been unwittingly conned and coddled by enough PSAs to believe that dreams come true, but know that reality has a way of interfering with its demands of rent checks and responsibilities. In our second month as China Loca, we played a show at a near-empty bar, where a few dudes enthusiastically jammed on Guitar Hero. There's something insulting and surreal about playing in your band to the backs of guys playing a video game about playing in a band. It was that same night when Gus's black ESP B105 five-string bass and our Boss ODB-3 pedal were stolen, to add injury to insult.

Even so, we claim small victories like taking our band on the road, as far south as San Diego, to Highland Park's Mr. T's Bowl, and how I fulfilled a China Loca dream show at Harold's in San Pedro. We played in between one-man-band extraordinaire, Almighty Do Me A Favor, and Underground Railroad To Candyland.

We followed URTC back up the coast to Oakland then two more shows back home in Portland. The last show we played together was a haze. I vaguely recall a moment where I looked down to see Todd in his chones.

"How come you're not wearing pants?" I slurred at him after their set, his dark green dinosaur costume slung below his knees.

"I got too hot!"

It made sense.

* * * * *

I'm in no position to tell anyone about how to do anything, but I have learned the key to *making shit happen*, whatever your choice *shit* may be, is to believe that there is no other way it could possibly be. That this is all.

This is all you have and all you have to give.

The stolen gear, the speeding ticket, the tiresome drives, the empty rooms, the fights, the accusations of being the worst band ever, the silence.

Every second of that uncomfortableness was worth it the moment we stepped down into Kim and Nick's basement and saw the banner that Mullett made. Five-feet long, lime green, featuring Gus and my gigantic heads on either end and said, "FUCK YOU CHINA LOCA." Then you remember the drink tickets, the awesome bands we played with, the camaraderie, the way Mullett danced and sung along to every one of our songs like he was in the room when we wrote them.

The bottom of the banner read, "Breaking up is stupid. You will be sorely missed."

It was our last show, ending as it begun in a Portland basement. This time, no one questioned our authenticity because we owned every forgotten lyric and fucked up note that was played.

"This is how we roll," I said in the middle of our last set ever. "And we roll hard."

We chose every moment of this. Sometimes we shake our heads and hang them low, wondering why we seldom make the right decisions. But the things we do, this life we chose, it was the best decision we've made.

–Amy Adoyzie
razorcake.org/amy/chinaloca

SQUEEZE MY HORN

GARY HORNBERGER

"Ah, Vegas, what a truly miserable city."

No Longer Lost in the Supermarket

Welcome to 2008, everybody. I hope everyone is doing well. For me, the New Year marks the first time in over seventeen years I haven't been working in the grocery world. That's right; the grind was too much for me. Now don't get me wrong; I understand that just because work gets to be rough that you're not supposed to quit. No, this has been a long time coming. See, in the grocery game, you get a new boss almost every three years. I've worked with the assholes and the competent ones; if it were just about quitting when the going gets rough, I would've been out a long time ago.

I did indeed make a list of pros and cons and one side was much longer than the other. That and kicking the dog—so to speak—pushed me toward my decision. Also, my loving wife helped immensely. Albertson's does not give exit interviews to its employees when they terminate employment, but if they did and for the reader's clarification (if they care), here is what it would probably read:

To whom it may concern, I understand that Albertson's does not give exit interviews, but I feel the need to explain to you my reasons for leaving the industry. The grocery business has become less attractive to work in for the last ten years, due to both competition and mergers. For example, Lucky stores being bought by American stores, which was bought by Albertson's, and finally acquired by Supervalu.

My final decision to exit was brought about by the placement of two of the worst managers I've seen in my seventeen-plus years in the business. The store director Jesus S. and the grocery manager Andy are seemingly only concerned with their own goals and not the concerns of the store in general. First off, I would like to detail Mr. S's lack of respect for his workers with a few examples. One day, while pulling bills in the office, Mr. S was heard, in reference to a worker's two-week notice, saying "I'm finally getting rid of that piece of shit." Now, it is one thing to think that but it is another to say it out loud with others in earshot.

Second on the list is a personal issue the man had with my own facial hair. I've had a handlebar moustache and goatee for the last seven years, which meets the company's criteria. On a recent store audit, however, the manager got dinged for my facial hair. Upon my clocking out and leaving the store, Mr. S decides to drop the bomb in front of fellow employees. On the front end of the store, he shouts to me, ushers me outside, and informs me of the audit. He asks if I can remove the hair. In a rage, I inform him that I will go home and contemplate a decision; that if it comes to a point of no return, I would retire my position, to which he simply shrugged his shoulders.

After driving home in a rage, I made phone calls to human resources and the union, reminding them that the grooming standard states "a moustache must not exceed below the lower lip line and must be well groomed" and that goatees are allowed as long as they are "well groomed." Handlebars go up and I think using wax constitutes well groomed. Upon returning to work it seemed that human resources came to the same conclusion. I also gave Mr. S *Webster's* definition of a goatee. Then I informed him that I had a great deal of problems with how he dealt with the situation, and that with the shrug of his shoulders, he proved to me that I had no value to him or the company as an employee.

The last example of importance would be the director's dealings and the company's dealings with the meat manager Mr. Alan M. Mr. M had worked for the company roughly eighteen-plus years and was consistently—if not always—head and shoulders above the rest in numbers for the district. Yes, that's money in your pocket, yet there was no leniency shown to him when he tried to remedy a one hundred mile round trip daily commute that was wearing on him and his family.

It is for these and other reasons that I could no longer work for a company that blatantly shows no value for its employees, a company that supposedly pushed dignity and respect, but has no problems with dispensing of veteran workers with college degrees who held department head positions and made the company profits. I would hope that, as a company, you would use this information as constructive criticism when considering personnel to manage your stores.

One last remark should be made. It is strange that a company that is so security-defined would have its store director forget to ask an employee for his keys to the office door and the forklift before getting his final paycheck. Hope that forklift doesn't end up in the drive-through at Wendy's.

Well, there it is. I can finally lay this baby to rest, stop complaining and explaining, and get on with what I truly need to be in this world. This is almost like therapy. I really feel better. I was feeling kind of bad because there are many people out there in far worse predicaments than this, both in our backyard and in other countries, but if they had the power to better themselves wouldn't they take it? Isn't that why people are constantly trying to get into this country: for a better life? So why isn't looking for a better job worthy of the struggle?

I must also admit that the response to my action has been met with more positive than negative reaction. The most interesting responses were at the poker tables in Vegas during the Punk Rock Bowling Tournament. People tend to look at you funny when you tell them that you just quit your job and there you sit playing poker, but the comments from the dealers who are non-union, make $6.35 an hour and community tips, go to school to train, and stand all day with mandatory overtime, were the one that really gave me the look. Ah, Vegas, what a truly miserable city.

So what will I do with my time? Back to school, a whole list of household projects and some part time work, or maybe something else… I'll keep you informed.

THE HICUP # 2

By Various artists, $?

Okay, this little book seemed doomed from the start. With only two stories—if you can call them that—and some columns and reviews at the back. The first story is about a guy who missed out on the punk experience at a high school that housed some great punk band three years earlier, but now all that the scene is, is tough guy hardcore. The second story is about the metaphysical game of Ms. Pacman. Who knew such a thing existed? All this made me tired and I can't tell you anything about what lies in the column and reviews section. Maybe it saved the comic? (www.madisonundergroundpress.com)

Illustration by Kiyoshi Nakazawa

Beer, Sex, and hot dogs. What more can one want from a comic?

BIG FUCKING DEAL #3

By Marc Parker, $3 U.S.

Marc, I like your comic. I don't know why but I do. See, usually the personal biography comics drag me down, but maybe it's the McGyverish way you use food stamps, copy machines, and an Indian clinic to carry on your life's plan that's cool. I also like all the bike riding he does. I mean, fifty miles to an eye exam. More green power to ya! I love the fact that this guy is living a productive, happy life without all the comforts the rest of us schmucks use. Three dollars is a small price to pay to read these exploits. (Marc Parker, 2000 NE 42 Ave. #221, Portland, OR 97213)

DROP DEAD DUMB #1

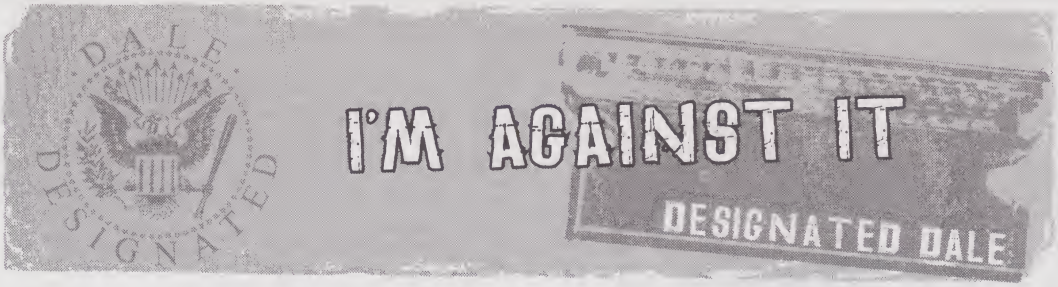
By Travis T, $2.50 U.S.

Oh my god, this is one great comic! The artwork is terrific and the stories are poignantly funny. Let's just start with "Lil Hitler"; the poor little bastard isn't even going to make it to issue two, unless it takes the premise of Itchy and Scratchy. I really don't know how to tell people about this comic without giving every hilarious story away. I know one guy who will love "Punk Rock dating 101." Let's just say the main character gives the date the boot when she complains about the Ramones. That's right Dale, I've got you right in the palm of my hand. How about a phone interview for a zine that doesn't exist or a bum backing up Smokey the smoke? Beer, sex, and hot dogs. What more can one want from a comic? I want issue number two and I want it right now. Thank you, Travis. (Travis T., 2214 Beasley Ave. NW, Huntsville, AL 35816)

SPIDDER #11

By various artist, $?

This comic/ stories would be cooler if there was any information on who was telling them. It's all these mysteries and creatures that haunt Alabama and them some cute little cartoons by Katie Kat. There are stories of the White Thing which is similar, I guess, to Bigfoot, and a headless ghost that roams the northern woods. It's just that I don't know if this stuff is made up for the book or made up by people in Alabama. It's cool to read and really holds you to the stories, but I think an air of possible eyewitness would make it a great read on Halloween. (Black Owl Radio, 1925 HWY 69 S. Savannah, TN 38372, thewednesdays@hotmail.com)



"Even though he was guilty, it felt a bit strange knowing that I had a part in unanimously sentencing some dude on what could be his third strike."

Bureaucracy, Crack, and Jury Duty

Jury duty is one of those "civic duties" that just about everyone has to deal with at least one time or another in their life. Well, most of us anyway: there are actually two types of people when it comes to dealing with that oh-so-familiar-looking summons received in the mail. Type #1 is the majority of most people. They do what they're expected; they call in and/or report for jury service, following the precise instructions, depending on what state they live in. Type #2 are those who toss the summons like junk mail into the can without even thinking twice about it. I'm what you'd consider Type #1. I always have been.

When I was working at my past job for fifteen-plus years, my place of employment was one of those that didn't pay a single penny towards their employees' jury service. Nada. It really use to get on my fucking nerves that Los Angeles County could give two shits less whether or not if you got paid by your employers when reporting for jury service. Not getting paid hasn't been an excuse for jury dismissal for quite some time now. Their basic attitude is: "We don't really care whether or not someone does or doesn't survive from paycheck to paycheck. It's not our problem. You're coming in, fuck you very much."

I'll admit, I was seriously tempted to join the ranks of the smaller Type #2 populous and start burning those summons after the first coupla years of receiving 'em. I mean, if you stop and think about it, how are they going to prove you received anything in the mail to begin with, short of sending them registered mail, right? Keeping in mind my track record of county and government agencies continually fucking up any and all paperwork that corresponds with me, I decided to keep doing the right thing and continue to play their game. Luckily enough, the only time I got picked for a jury while I was at my old job was for a criminal trial, so I was basically assed-out of a paycheck that week.

Every other time, I got excused by listening to exactly what the prosecution and/or defense attorneys didn't want to hear while selecting jurors. Even that has its limits these days. It isn't as easy as it used to be, trying to get thrown off a jury selection panel by telling everyone in that courtroom (including the judge) that you have a serious problem with any type of police official.

After starting my new job over a year and a half ago, I was more than pleased to find out that our employer pays up to ten days of jury duty service and I actually looked forward to actually sitting on a jury. I waited to get a summons in the mail, knowing that I would be fully compensated, like everyone else I know.

In early 2007, I finally received a summons to be on call for jury service for the second week in April, at the Beverly Hills courthouse, way across town from Yvonne and I. We're talking a forty-five-minute drive, easily, if not more with traffic, driving cross-town through Los Angeles from Glendale. Yeah, like I'd be an excellent part to some jury in Beverly Hills with all my other "peers." What the fuck is that? Are they gonna ask me to deliberate on whether or not Paris Hilton should get death by stoning? I mean, don't get me wrong—I'd vote yes on her worthless, boney ass, but I have no business serving on a jury in Beverly Hills.

Regardless, I called the automated info line the Sunday night before and the recorded message said I didn't have to report Monday morning, but to call again Monday night to see if I had to report for Tuesday. Easy enough, right?

I called up Monday night over a dozen times and it was the same recorded message from Sunday night. I was getting pretty livid because there was a chance that I might have to show up Tuesday morning, but some simple fuck forgot to switch out the updated message for that evening. I figured, "Screw this. It's late and I'm going to bed 'cause I'm not the only one who's sitting on the other end of the automated line with their thumb up their butt, wondering what to do next."

Early the next morning, I decided to call the L.A. County Juror Helpline and let them know that someone was asleep at the wheel in Beverly Hills and, if I needed to show up across town or not, I wasn't driving all the way out there for fucking nothing. After twenty-five minutes on hold, I got a pleasant enough woman who had been fielding my same question all morning. She was helpful, but in no way told me exactly how many people like myself had called in that morning nor elaborated as to why Beverly Hills shirked on their phone line duties after I ask her a few times.

Getting the vibe that I was becoming increasingly pissed off at all this wasted time, she immediately offered to set up a new jury service date for me at my choice of court location (and she should've credited me for one day, now that I think of it, damn it!). I quickly responded, "Downtown L.A., please," knowing I can take full advantage of a quick Metrolink train and Metro Red Line rail route from our neighborhood that Yvonne uses every time she has to report for jury service downtown. Using the trains instead of driving would not only save me a lotta time in the morning clusterfuck getting downtown, but it also would omit the problem of having to park blocks away from the courthouse uphill. Even better, the Red Line stops at a rail station right across the street from the criminal courts building I had to go to. The main jury room even gives you enough free round trip tickets to use on the Metrolink and Metrorail for the duration of your jury stint (after the first day). Most court systems across the country offer this kind of free transportation service to its jurors, so I say take it for all it's worth. I even ended up with a leftover roundtrip ticket that's good through March.

A few months later, I ended up having to report in December and got placed onto a jury for a case involving some guy selling crack to an undercover officer near skid row in the downtown area of Los Angeles. I was somewhat surprised that both sides of the case chose me as a juror (I'm a licensed pharmacy tech), but what surprised me even more was that an actual pharmacist also got selected. What were they thinking, putting us two on the trial? I have no idea, but I was really hoping that it was some kind of setup or they had the wrong person. Unfortunately, it was more than evident that the guy was slinging rocks and had more than enough credible evidence against him. I have to say that even though he was guilty, it felt a bit strange knowing that I had a part in unanimously sentencing some dude on what could be his third strike.

Those working on the case or in the courtroom never let you know if it was the defendant's final strike or not, let alone know the extent of their sentencing. The stated job of a juror isn't to know this or anything else about the person in question, but to strictly examine the facts of the case. I did talk with someone who worked at the jury room to see if there was some kind of way to check the results of prior cases online and he said there was. Part of me would really like to know

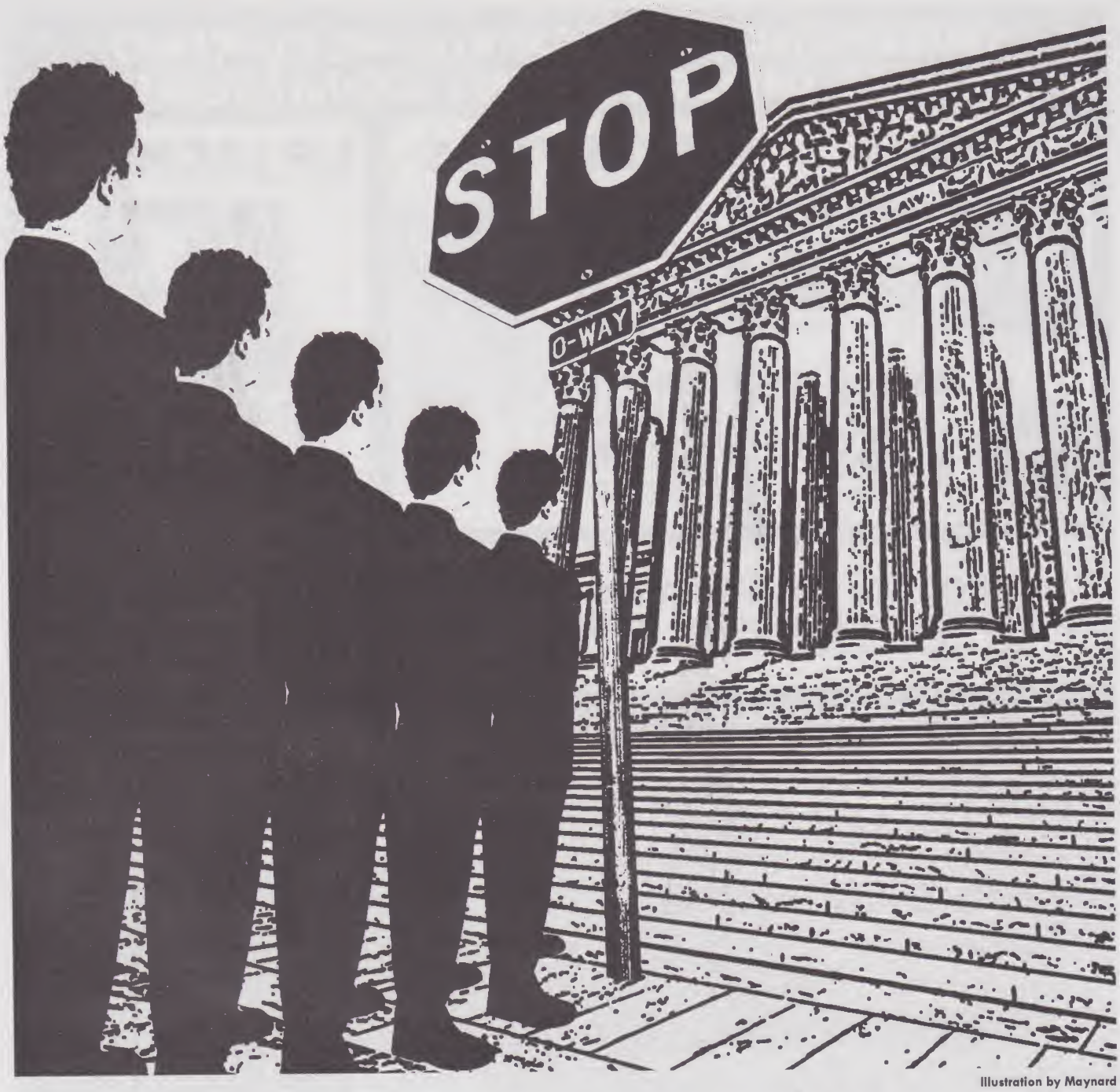


Illustration by Maynard

Everyone's got their hardships, but everyone also has to live with their choices.

what happened—being that I was born with a huge streak of morbid curiosity engrained into my brain—but a small part of me, for whatever reason, says to let it be.

I think that the core compulsion to do my "civic duty" was instilled into me since I was a little kid. Always try to do the right thing, no matter how fucked up things might get or be. On the same hand, I was always told to ask questions or inquire into something, especially if things seemed wrong or really didn't jive. To me, it just seems if people at least tried, *really* honestly tried to do the right thing, the world would likely be a better place to be around. Everyone's got their hardships, but everyone also has to live with their choices.

Crack is wack & I'm Against It,
–Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com

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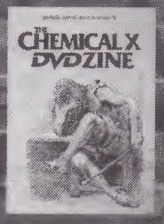

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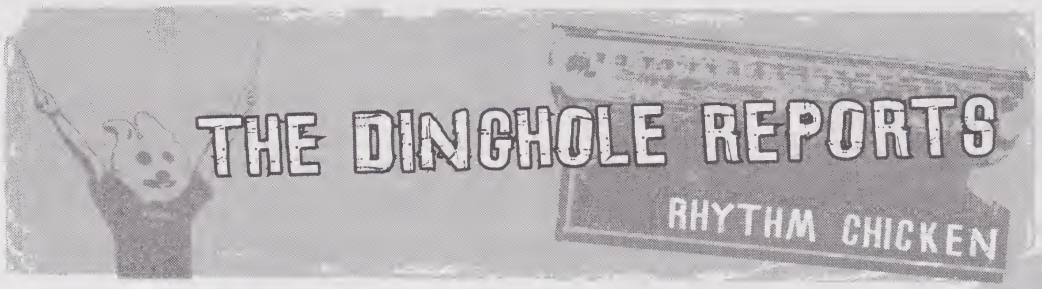

"The Rhythm Chicken is your new LEEEEAD JAMMER!"

Catfight on Wheels!

The Dinghole Reports
By The Rhythm Chicken
(Commentary by Francis Funyuns)
[Edited by Dr. Sicnarf]

Last Saturday my alarm had me up at five A.M. I threw the drums into my car and drove off to work my winter job, slinging drinks at the local coffee shop. All my regular customers came in. I was excitedly telling them all about my big trip to Milwaukee that night. A light snow had been falling all morning. It looked beautiful, but I was hoping it'd stop. I had a long drive ahead of me.

Jill showed up early to relieve me at noon, giving me extra time to make it down to Brewtown. The snow was still coming down, inch after inch. My car is not entirely suited for winter conditions. The rear tires are completely bald and the defroster fan can be finicky at times. Slipping and sliding around at a top speed of forty, I wasn't making good time. By the time I got to Manitowoc the snow had finally let up. The remaining two hour drive was less stressful. What is normally a three and a half hour drive became five hours. I thought to myself, "This better cluckin' be worth it!"

I rolled into Milwaukee and headed directly to the southside, my old stomping grounds. After hitting my favorite café, my favorite record store, and the Italian restaurant I used to work at, time had come for me to head over to the night's big gig. I had been asked to perform as the halftime show for a big roller derby match! I seriously had no idea what to expect, but knew it would be remarkable nonetheless.

I first heard of the Brewcity Bruisers a few years back. They are Milwaukee's all-girl hardcore roller derby league. I'd heard of certain acquaintances being involved with the roller action and it seemed to be comprised of mostly underground scenesters with tattoos and hardcore attitudes. I was surely intrigued! For some reason, I pictured a very low-budget ragged display of girls fighting on wheels. I pictured maybe a few hundred punker-types yelling from the stands, and the Puketon's bashing out some 1-2-3-4-core in the corner. Maybe the cops would show up and stop the fun, asking to see the roller derby permit, etc….

I showed up at the venue, the Milwaukee Sports Mega-Complex. This place was HUGE. Once at the door, I noticed the night's admission was twelve bucks! Would punker-types pay twelve bucks to see their girlfriends fighting on rollerskates? Once at the ticket booth, I announced that I was supposed to be the halftime show. The lady said, "Oh, you must be the chicken drummer." I was soon introduced to the RCIC (roller chick in charge). She introduced herself to me as "Bootsi Call…er, Betsy". Miss Bootsi Call was quite easy on the eyes, in her roller skates and tight, colorful uniform.

Bootsi rolled around, showing me where to load in, where to store my kit, and where and when to set up and play. Once loaded in, I wandered around and marveled at the production level of the night's performance. This thing was totally serious. There was a very huge and elaborate lighting setup, an immense sound system, a huge audio-visual display, and loads of bleacher seats set up all around the track. My friend John Burger (old Chicken roadie) walked up and handed me a beer. He was wearing a fancy suit and his hair was slicked back. John was one of the announcers for the big event.

The doors were opened and the fans started pouring in. I was picturing a rowdy bunch of punkers, bikers, and other brewtown miscreants. What soon filled the huge venue was an amazing cross-section of Milwaukeeans. Derby moms and dads, families, grandparents, punkers, metal dudes, mechanics, businessmen, kids, old dudes, cute couples, freaks, normal folks, computer geeks, gamers, jocks, chicks, etc…. They just kept pouring in, twelve bucks a head. I was in shock. This is when I started suspecting that it would all totally be worth the hellish drive down.

I wandered around and mingled with friends. The rollergirls started practice laps around the track. There were four teams competing in this night's championship bout: the Crazy 8's, the Shevil Knevils, the Rushin' Rollettes, and Maiden Milwaukee. These ladies looked tough as nails! They were a blur of tattoos and tight uniforms. The night was really lookin' to be a hoot! I continued to wander around with a few brews and marvel at the rapidly growing attendance. John later told me it was a record crowd, over THIRTEEN HUNDRED! Oh yeah, this was worth the cluckin' drive!

This was my first roller derby ever, and I was just soaking it all in. The first match started and the fans just went *nuts*! Lots of folks held up big signs with their favorite rollergirl's name. Some of the fans wore kooky costumes themselves. There was one guy running around in a banana suit, another in a big lime suit (???), and then one big, burly guy in grey camo fatigues running around, waving a huge old soviet Russian flag! The girls were zooming around the track, bumping each other around, jabbing elbows and snarling. Things were getting pretty intense! I was afraid that my own ruckus would seem somewhat tame in comparison to *this*.

The announcers were rapidly yelling out play-by-play commentary. The rollergirls all had cool tough names like Edna Gein, Milwaukee's Breast, Lacy/DC, Norma Bates, Trash Talkin' Tina, Smirk Savage, Pound Anya, Ivana Smackdavitch, Beelzebelle, Boo Boo Kitty, Kinky Tuscadero, Tam-A-Saurus Wrecks, Little Miss Tuffhit, Pabsty Cline, Termiskater, Jenerous Beating, Kim'N'Tonic, and, my favorite, Fidela Castrate! These ladies meant business! Rollergirls were flying around the track and the fans went ape! Every time a jammer would break through the pack and take the lead, the announcers would yell, "Pabsty Cline is your new LEEEEEEAD JAMMER!" Every now and then the action would halt so the medics could roll an injured girl off the track. The sound system was rocking out some Motörhead, AC/DC, and the theme to *Laverne & Shirley*! I was getting nervous. This was surely a tough act to follow!

(Okay, Chicken. We all know you were just oggling the rollergirls, wishing one of them would beat you up. – F.F.)

[Honestly, Mr. Chicken, it sounds like amongst these ladies you must've come off as a little church mouse with a toy bongo set. – Dr. S.]

Yeah. So, before I knew it, the second match was done and it was halftime. John helped me quickly set up my Chickenkit out on the track. The halftime show started with a group of girls called the Brewcity Beerleaders! More tattooed girls with colored, spiky hair and pom-poms! I was simply in awe. How could I possibly follow all this?

Dinghole Report #91: Roller derby Rhythm Ruckus!

(Rhythm Chicken sighting #413)

The Beerleaders were doing some sassy routine to the Beastie Boys. On the sidelines I handed my glasses to John, asking him to hold them during my show. I pulled off my shirt and pulled on the Chickenhead. I was ready. John was out on the track addressing the crowd about one thing or another with his back towards me. I marched out onto the track, bare-chested and mildly drunk. The crowd started to applaud. I marched right past the Chicken kit and picked up my pace to a stealthy trot, straight towards John. Then, with no warning, I completely blindsided him, jumping onto his back and effectively tackling him to the ground! The unsuspecting 1,300 rollerfans let out a collective "What the…?"

John and I were rolling around in chivalrous wrestle-like glory! He was laughing uncontrollably while I was growling, snarling, thrashing about, pounding, and squirming. The other announcer started giving a heated play-by-play of the unexpected match! John's cordless mic had come undone. Huh! Finally, we were pulled apart. John, still laughing, tried to gather himself and fix his hair. I darted around, threatening the crowd as if I were the Crusher! The other announcer commented on having me put into the PENALTY BOX! The first few minutes of my gig and I hadn't even gone NEAR the drums! Well, I guess I had to get that out of the way.

I mounted the Chickenkit and began pounding out my ol' time northwoods ruckus rhythms. Some of the crowd totally went nuts, yelling and hollering, egging the chicken on to more rockin' ruckus. The rest of the crowd seemed to be utterly confused. What kind of halftime show was THIS? I halted and pulled a bottle of beer to my chickenlips. The crowd yelled! I pounded out some more ruckus and knew my time slot was coming to an end. Time to abort!

With little to no grace, I kicked the drums around and did some sort of floppity-flip. The set was trashed as I lay beaten and panting on the track. The crowd roared. The other announcer bellowed, "The Rhythm Chicken is your new LEEEEAD JAMMER!" I crawled to the sidelines in search of another beer. After the referees threw my drums aside and wiped up my spilled beer off the track, John walked over and, still laughing, shook my hand. It was then that I realized my glasses were in his pocket!

The second half of the event was even more vicious! The roller derby action became more intense. Fights broke out and the refs had their hands full. Catfight on wheels! Pile-up! I was totally eating it up! The night had been a complete success. Just when things couldn't seem any more punk, Rev. Nørb walked out of the crowd. I wasn't the only one who drove down for this. Nørb informed me of another roller derby league starting up soon in Appleton. That's a bit closer to home, and welcome news.

I met some friends at the Palomino for a few more drinks, and then finally left town at 12:30. The drive north started out just fine, with me still in roller derby afterglow. Then around Manitowoc, I rolled back into the same snowstorm I'd left twelve hours earlier. The ride became treacherous yet again. I finally walked into my home at five A.M. in just enough time to get ready for work. I was totally tweaked on caffeine, sore from chickening, dead tired, and still laughing inside. At seven A.M. I flipped the "Open" sign. My first regular customer came in and said, "Hey Chicken. What's new?"

"Oh, not much."

–Rhythm Chicken
rhythmchicken@hotmail.com

Illustration By Steve Larder
www.stevelarder.co.uk

The unsuspecting 1,300 rollerfans let out a collective "What the...?"

"I DON'T HAFTA DO ANYTHING BUT BUY A TICKET AND GET DRUNK!!! Now THAT'S a fucking revolution i tell you!"

ROLLER DERBY SAVED MY SOUL
OR
DUDES SHIT IN CONTEMPT OF DUDES

…i have never, i mean fucking NEVER, had this much shit break on me at once. It's like half of everything i own has fallen victim to some manner of Nørb-ø-Centric electromagnetic pulse, designed by some crafty and inscrutable foe to wreck MY stuff, and my stuff alone. *It's a Nørb-seeking inverse neutron bomb! A Whammy! A Jinx!! AN UNUSUALLY LOCALIZED WORLDWIDE HOODOO™!!!* First off, my fucking laptop broke, and i think that's because the Roomba® ate the cord, which, obviously, immediately casts aspersions on the character of the Roomba® itself, but, HA, i know that that's what they WANT me to think, and that the hard-working and deferential Roomba®'s merely being framed. I mean, come on, how can you suggest that anything that sucks dirt off my living room floor be guilty of any untoward maneuver whatsoever? ((er, wait. Now that i think about it, i think i had an ex-girlfriend who did, in fact, once suck dirt off my living room floor, one way or the other, so… hmmm… yes, i see what you mean, that Roomba® is shifty as shit, now that you mention it)) I haul out the iMac™ G4. That's fine; i have more porn on the iMac™ than the laptop. However, the only writin' software i have on the iMac™ is the free crap it came with, and THAT somehow causes the middle part of last issue's column to malevolently evaporate, thereby failing to convey the rather critical bit of information that the reason i was riding a bus around London at 2 AM is because the "tube," as the kids say, was "shut" – requiring me to attempt to re-trace my metaphorical footsteps back to the airport by remembering which stops i had passed on the way there, which was only possible because so many subway/bus stops in London found their way into the lyrics of songs. BUT NEVER MIND THOSE PARTICULAR BOLLOCKS! No sooner was the G4 gaily chugging away when the internet went out. I was on the phone every night to TDS Metrocom™'s alleged tech guys, to no avail ((*Avail?* Yikes, it keeps getting worse)) ((my favorite thing about talking with guys at the help desks – and, admittedly, it's a pretty short list – is when you reach someone who is obviously of East Indian descent, and they answer the phone with *"Hello, my name is* [[pause to read good wholesome American name off of cheat sheet]] *JOHN. How can i be of service?"* I often debate the morality of responding [[in my best DJ voice]] with *"My name is* [[pause]] *Rajneesh. My internet hasn't worked since November. Help me out, you lovable All-American rascal, you!"*)) So now my laptop doesn't work, and my internet doesn't work. I attempt to walk this off by futzing around with my Pachinko machine, and, as i rapidly deafen myself by pointlessly shooting a vast array of ball bearings into a garishly lit-up, noise-producing contraption *((and, speaking of garishly lit-up, noise-producing contraptions, here's Margaret Dumont!))*, the little LCD screen in the middle of the playing field goes dark. *Et tu,* ***Police Adventure****?* ((it was really a shame, too. I loved the little videos on that screen. They featured some ludicrously bucktoothed Japanese policeman character who would eat rice and be in love with the TV newsgirl. I think his name was John)) So i go to work, partially because that's only place with functioning internet. I wind up downloading a fucking virus ((you didn't hear me say that)), more or less destroying my hard drive. At this point, i'm sure the anticipation is virtually palpable amongst ye: *Oh my stars and garters, whatever could that nasty man have been downloading that brought such a fate upon company property???* Contrary to my employer's repeated assertion, i was NOT downloading porn when i got the virus – i was downloading **.vpt** – "Visual Pinball Table" – files: Computerized pinball table emulators, made by hobbyists. I downloaded ***Zig Zag*** ((Williams, 1964)), and ***Doozie*** ((also manufactured by Williams, 1968)), but when i went to download the software that would actually *run* those .vpt's, all heck broke loose ((at this point in time, i'm damnably certain you're scratching yourself in intimate befuddlement and asking [[rhetorically]] *"gosh, Rev. Nørb! Why were you downloading computerized simulations of* ***Zig Zag*** *and* ***Doozie****? Don't you own THE ACTUAL MACHINES those simulators were based off of?"* Well, yes, Bobby. Yes i do. But they ***DON'T FUCKING WORK, EITHER!!*** [[actually, ***Zig Zag*** works partially, as long as you don't shoot the "D" rollover lane, but my ***Doozie*** machine, like George W. Bush, hasn't worked a day in its life, at least not since i've known it {{truth be told, i actually own a ***Daffie*** machine, which is the Add-A-Ball version of ***Doozie***, for states where winning a free game of pinball was considered immoral by local standards}} {{in further heinous use of double-bracketeering, i actually purchased the ***Daffie*** machine from the guy who runs the club where i saw the Vibrators a few years ago, when Knox wrote "KNOX 2004" on my "Baby Baby" sleeve and i thought it said "KING SZOOT" and then i ran into the bookcase with a boner and reviewed Ramones songs. Which, now that i think about it, seems to implicate noneother than King Szoot in this whole unsightly chocolate mess!!!}}]])). So, yeah. Three of my four pinball machines either flat-out do not work, or only work partially. One of my two jukeboxes and zero of my one pachinko machines work. My work computer does not work. My internet was out for two months, and my Roomba® was belching up the remains of my laptop power supply. Needless to say, it was only a matter of time before i blew up my engine as well. Yep, that's right: Reverend Nørb, Your Automotive Genius, put a rod thru the side of the oil pan ((and no, the rod in question was NOT King Szoot!)) while attempting to get his ailing car back home from roller derby. Which is, of course, where you came in: AS OF 10:26 PM CST 02.05.08 ((and actually long before that)), ROLLER DERBY IS **COOOL**. Now, i realize that i am not the first to bring this information to light. I am not within five years of staking a claim as some manner of way-hip early adopter, or representing myself as some manner of banner-flailing trailblazer ((or some manner of Trailblazer-flailing Banner for that matter, although Bruce Banner dba The Incredible Hulk™ beating mightily on Bill Walton would make for excellent halftime entertainment)). I can only say that i've been going to bouts ((yep!)) fairly regularly for about a year and a half now, and, by golly, i've seen teams hailing from Arizona to Appleton— i've seen fat chicks and skinny chicks and chicks in rubber masks—girls in fishnets and and girls with prosthetic Mohawks glued to their helmets—i've sat in the Suicide Seating and gotten my Rolling Rock® kicked into my roller-dink by rollergirls at a roller rink—and i have yet to see anything—ANYTHING AT ALL—that would disabuse me of the notion that ROLLER DERBY IS THE LAST **AND ONLY** HOPE FOR OUR NATION!!!

Illustration by Ryan Gelatin

PUNK + PUNS + WOP-BOP-A-LOO-BOP FISHNET STOCKIN'S = SOLD.

THERE AIN'T NO GODDAMN ROLLER DERBY IN SAUDI ARABIA, JACK!!! Hilary Clinton, you got something to say??? STRAP ON THE PADS, WOMAN! Me and Barack Obama will watch ((hmm, considering who your husband is, that's probably not the first time you've heard anyone say that))! ***HEAR ME JESUS!!!*** I AM A ***SINNER***, AND I ACCEPT ***ROLLER DERBY*** AS THE ***ENTIRETY*** OF OUR NEW SOCIAL ORDER!!! *Stand up! Fall down! Be counted!* Accept Roller Derby as your ONE TRUE TICKET to the GRAND COSMIC HOKEY-POKEY! *Are you a man, or are you a mouse?* ((Wait, i *met* Mouse, she plays for Madison!)) Well then, *are you a boy, or are you a girl?* ***ARE YOU DERBY, OR ARE YOU A FURBY™, FOR CRIPES SAKES???*** Roller Derby being the entirety of the New World Order™ *rules*, 'cause *I'M A GUY! I couldn't be on a team even if i WANTED to!* ***I DON'T HAFTA DO ANYTHING BUT BUY A TICKET AND GET DRUNK!!!*** Now THAT'S a fucking revolution i tell you! I mean, seriously. Seriously. Roller Derby bouts are the only places these days where i feel like i must have stepped into some Brobdingnagian *((attention, citizens of Brobdingnag! Your culture has been routinely trivialized yet again!))* dimensional rift, because EVERYTHING ACTUALLY MAKES SENSE THERE. Going to a bout leads to RANDOM and SERENDIPITOUS acts of BELIEVEMENT. I'll be standing there going *"my goodness, are they actually playing the UNDERTONES?"* and before i can even cope with the cosmically fraught implications of *that*, a rollergirl named Bonnie Thunders will skate past me. In fishnets. PUNK + PUNS + WOP-BOP-A-LOO-BOP FISHNET STOCKIN'S = **SOLD**. And, to top it all off, somewhere in the midst of all this wonderment, there's a sport that ISN'T played by and for assholes. I mean, shit—at the Nationals in Austin last summer, they had the Junior Derby teams from Tucson and Seattle throw down between bouts. I'm slurping beer, they're playing "The American Ruse" by the MC5, and i'm watching eleven-year old girls in helmets and KISS makeup knock each other on their asses. The transcendent gloriousness of it all veritably buggers description! Roller Derby is the type of sport where one *Razorcake* columnist ((for example, me)) can attend a bout, and find, to his surprise, that the halftime entertainment consists of another *Razorcake* columnist ((for example, the Rhythm Chicken)), and said fact isn't even that amazingly noteworthy. If the presence of a player named *Bonnie Thunders* isn't enough punk-ola to sway your corroded arteries derby-ward, there's also a *Joanie Thunders*, a *Joanie Rotten*, a *Bonnie Rotten*, a *Joanie Rollmoan* and a *Zoey Ramone*. Naturally, there's also a *Dee Dee Ramona*, who wears number **1-2-3-4!** ((*Ziggy Pop*, however, just goes for the comparatively no-frills **1234**)), and should never be confused with *Hello Kittastrophe*, whom i may or may not have known in the Biblical sense, who sports number **53rd & 3rd**. *Barbie Crash?* Check. *Debbie Scary?* Check. *Billie Midol, Bitchin' Camaro, Violet Femme?* All check. Even a demented punster such as myself finds himself scraping for punk punnage that these intrepid lasses haven't jumped on ((all i can come up with so far is "Brat Scabies" and "Paula Slamonon" so it's probably for the best that they won't let me on a team)). In any event, like any good late-to-the-party evangelist, when i found out that a roller derby league was forming in my neck of the tundra ((*Grand Chute, Wisconsin!* Home of Joe McCarthy and a bunch of cow shit. Whoops, redundant)), i immediately, fez in hand, offered my services as announcer, with my first real combat coming during last week's inaugural expo bout. Mindful of modern derby's socko playlists, i grabbed a handful of legit killer GirlRock—*The Runaways! The Epoxies! The Sirens! The Launderettes! Nikki and the mother-slappin' Corvettes!*—and, upon my entry to the premises, promptly set up shop in the vacant DJ booth. The crowd began to trickle in, first by the dozens, then by the hundreds. *SOON! IT WOULD BE SOON! I'll teach these fucking McCarthyites a lesson in ROCK they shall not soon forget!* Compelled to step outside for a sec by circumstances beyond my control, i returned to the rink, only to be greeted by the one sight sure to freeze the lymph in any sane man's nodes: *The roller rink's house DJ was in the DJ booth. Playing records. His.* My dreams of a night of perfect roller derby revolution were shot down in a blaze of Def Leppard and Lynyrd Skynyrd. Medleyed. Together. When i got home that night i found out my satellite TV didn't work any more. *NOTE TO GOD: In the future, please wreck Skater's Edge DJ's shit—not mine.* Thank you.

Løve,
Nørb

MY TWENTY-SEVENTH COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT.

TO CONTINUE FROM TWO ISSUES AGO, I NEVER GOT TO ANNOUNCE THE **FEST SIX AWARDS** WINNERS 2007!

BEST BAND FRIDAY: FUTURE VIRGINS.
BEST BAND SATURDAY- UNDER GROUND RAILROAD TO CANDY LAND
BEST BAND SUNDAY- SASS DRAGONS
BEST BEARD- PAUL MICOU
HARDEST PARTIER- PARTY MARTY!
BEST T-SHIRT DESIGN: OFF WITH THEIR HEADS
BEST FLEA MARKET BOOTH: FAST CROWD RECORDS!

BEST SUPRISE- THE BROKE DOWNS
BEST VENUE- SIDEBAR
KING OF THE FEST- TONY WEINBENDER

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THE WINNERS!

OKAY, NOW THAT'S OUT OF THE WAY, WE CAN GET TO THE REAL FEST AWARDS! THESE DIDN'T HAVE TROPHIES BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE CATEGORIES WERE GONNA BE!

BEST PARTY WAS THE HOLIDAY INN POOL PARTY ON SATURDAY. IT TURNED INTO A LITTLE RIOT!!

WORST VENUE STAFF GOES TO "THE VENUE" AND I DIDN'T EVEN GO INSIDE THE PLACE!

I DIDN'T COME ALL THE WAY TO FLORIDA TO GET FRISKED BY A GUY IN URBAN CAMO.

BEST IDEA GOES TO THE CARTRIDGE FAMILY. THEY DIDN'T GET ACCEPTED TO PLAY THE FEST, SO THEY SET UP ON A FLAT BED TRUCK AND PLAYED ALL OVER TOWN!

WORST IDEA GOES TO THE FEST FLEA MARKET. I COULDN'T EVEN FIND IT! WHERE WAS IT?

HUH? TO POOL

WORST SET GOES TO THE BLOODBATH AND BEYOND HOUSE SHOW. I CAN'T BELIEVE I MISSED THE RINGERS FOR THAT!

WORST GUEST GOES TO NATO, FOR SLEEPING ON THE FLOOR OF MY HOTEL ROOM TIL LIKE 4 PM ALL THREE DAYS, SO THE ROOM NEVER GOT MADE UP.

I DON'T HAVE ANY TOWELS BECAUSE OF YOU, NATO!

OVERALL, THIS YEAR GETS WORST FEST EVER. NOT FOR ANY REASON OTHER THAN LANCE NOT BEING THERE.

SIGH

FEST 6:

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR? AM I GONNA GO NEXT YEAR?

APOLOGIES TO LANCE FOR MY LAST COLUMN. HE LIKED THE SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS, NOT NEW YORK. I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WAS A DIFFERENCE.

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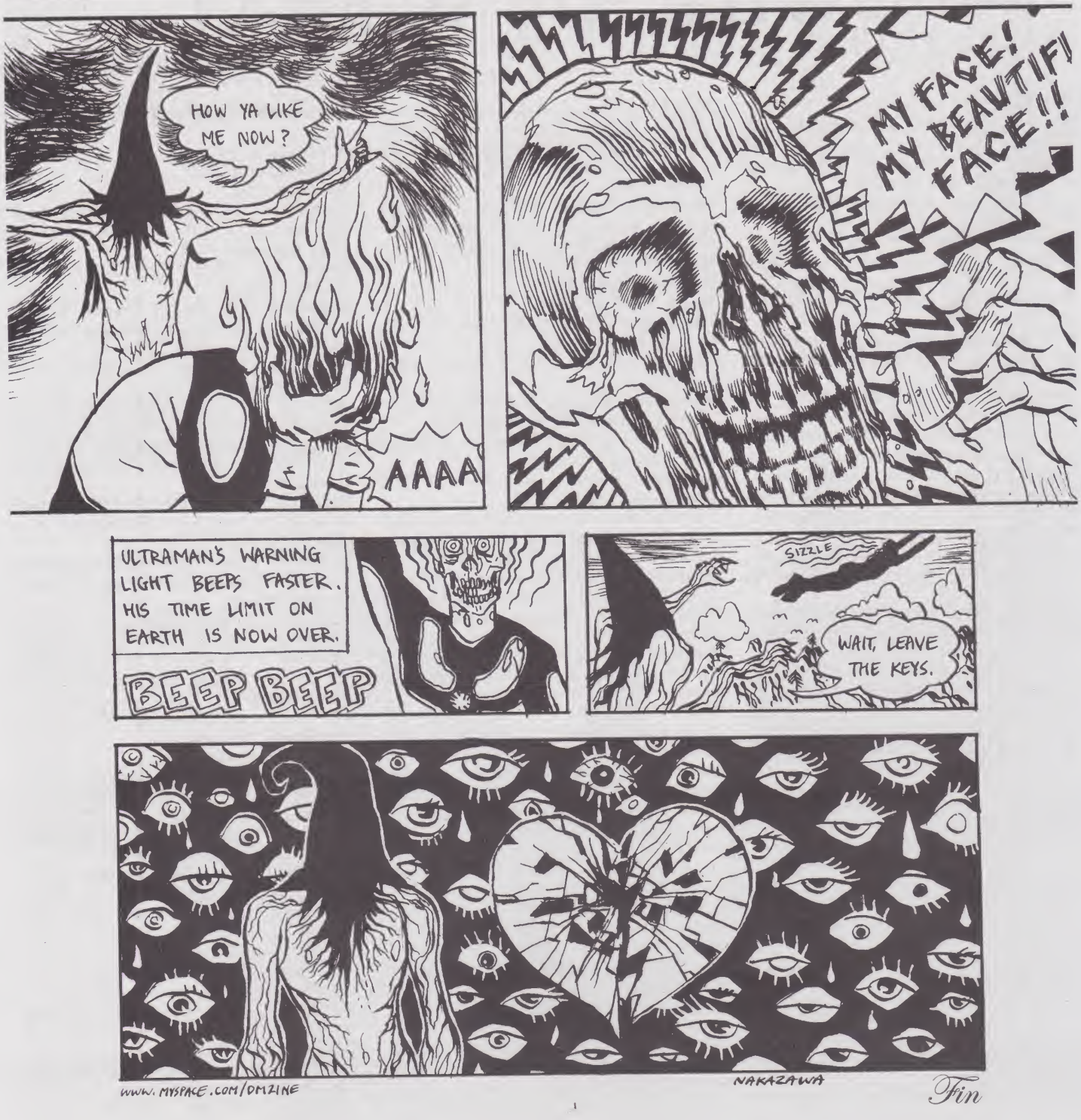
Previously in Won Ton Not Now a enchanted date went suddenly sour. The girl was revealed to be the monster Bullymya and in a incredible twist of fate the boy ended up being the giant hero Ultraman.
But now the end seems near for Ultraman after being hit with a acid vomit attack.

The bowel rupturing conclusion of the story entitled **Cobra vs. Mongoose Forever.**



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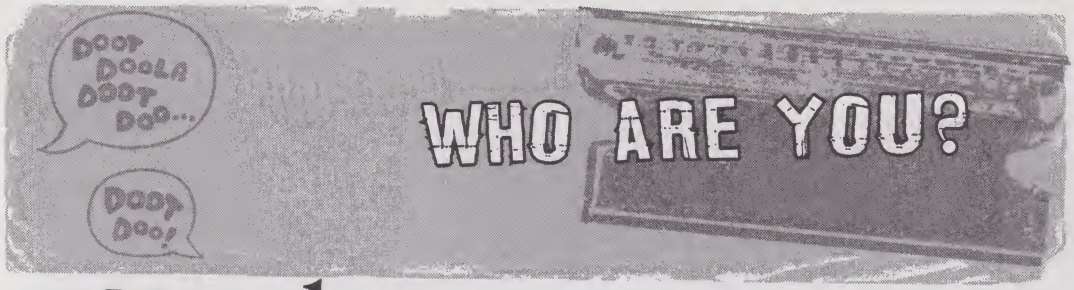

"Weird Al: I'm more apt to incorporate a parrot into my act than a concertina, 'cause a concertina, that's just too many buttons."

Nardwuar the Human Serviette vs. Weird Al Yankovic

Nardwuar: Who are you?
Weird Al: You know, a lot of people think I'm Kenny G, but I'm not. I don't play the saxophone well. I'm, uh, Al Yankovic, but you can call me Al Yankovic.
Nardwuar: Weird Al, welcome to Richmond, British Columbia, Canada.
Weird Al: Thank you very much.
Nardwuar: Weird Al, I have a quote here from Hunter S. Thompson.
Weird Al: Good. Does he say something pithy and unique?
Nardwuar: This is what Hunter S. Thompson says. He says, "When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro."
Weird Al: And I certainly did, didn't I?
Nardwuar: That's what I was wondering about. What about the mainstreaming of weird. How do you become weird these days?
Weird Al: It used to be a four-year course, now it's a five-year course to get accredited. It's a lot of work and I don't recommend it for the timid or the meek.
Nardwuar: Where does weird go, though? Like, where can weird go these days? Where can you take weird?
Weird Al: Weird, as you know, has been assimilated into our society. You can be a weird belly dancer or a weird CEO, president of a multinational conglomeration. So weird is all over the place these days.
Nardwuar: Well, do you feel a bit jealous at all, Weird Al, because Justin Timberlake with his "Dick in a Box" routine that won an Emmy?
Weird Al: As well it should have.
Nardwuar: It should have, but that means like weird going mainstream—totally mainstream. He's scooping you, Weird Al.
Weird Al: Well, I don't look at it as scooping me. I look at it as me laying the groundwork so Justin Timberlake can have his moment in the sun.
Nardwuar: Like, the weirdness is out there.
Weird Al: It is.
Nardwuar: More than ever.
Weird Al: More than ever. I was the pioneer, just laying the foundation—the foundation, as it were, for the rest of our weird society.
Nardwuar: Now, when you think of weird society, do you think of UFOs? Are you into the UFOs?
Weird Al: It depends what you mean by UFO. You mean like something from *Plan 9 from Outer Space*?
Nardwuar: The classic: Roswell, Stanton T. Friedman.
Weird Al: Oh yes. Yes, indeed. Well, I certainly believe they are unidentified. And they appear to be flying objects. So I think they probably are unidentified flying objects.
Nardwuar: Because Weird Al, UFO guys now are so strucken by this weirdness in society that they've left UFO studies.
Weird Al: They're "strucken"?
Nardwuar: Yes they have.
Weird Al: My goodness.
Nardwuar: UFO guys are now mountain biking in Afghanistan!
Weird Al: That's crazy. I've always wanted to do that.
Nardwuar: They gave up the UFOs because it's ~~not~~ weird anymore to do the UFOs.
Weird Al: I gotta get myself a mountain bike. What am I thinking?
Nardwuar: Weird Al, have you interacted with any weird people at all?
Weird Al: Not so far in my life, but I'm looking forward to it. If you know any weird people, you know, give them my email address.
Nardwuar: Well, this is what I was wondering about, this particular weird person, Blowfly. [Nardwuar shows Weird Al Blowfly's *On Tour* album cover]
Weird Al: Blowfly! I used to shave his uncle!
Nardwuar: What can you tell the people about Blowfly? He is on Weird World records!
Weird Al: Uh-huh. I haven't heard a lot of Blowfly's material, but I've heard him described as an X-rated Weird Al Yankovic.
Nardwuar: Which I was wondering about. Would you ever do any weird parodies? Would you ever do any X-rated parodies? Or have you done them, Weird Al?
Weird Al: But then people would confuse me with Blowfly, and you know, we get confused on the street all the time. A lot of times, I'd be walking down the street and people would go, "Hey, Blowfly!" And I go, "No, no, no. Blowfly looks like this." I bring this album cover along with me so I can show the difference. This is me; this is Blowfly. [Al then points to a nude lady on Blowfly's LP cover] And this is Blowfly's friend.
Nardwuar: They do have some similarities. They do. Al and Blowfly do have some similarities, don't they Al?
Weird Al: Yes, less than a syllable apart.
Nardwuar: Well, the similarities for instance, Blowfly takes the song "Sitting on the Dock of the ____"
Weird Al: "Bay?"
Nardwuar: And turns it into "Shittin' on the ____"
Weird Al: "Dock!"
Nardwuar: "Of the?"
Weird Al: "Bay."
Nardwuar: He got in big trouble from Otis Wedding's wife, but then you know what happened?
Weird Al: What happened to Otis *Wed*ding's wife?
Nardwuar: Well, Blowfly was able to show a picture of him and Otis Redding together and everything was okay.
Weird Al: You can do anything with Photoshop these days.
Nardwuar: So I guess what I was wondering, Weird Al, what pictures do you carry with you in case somebody gets mad about the songs you're covering and you can go like, "Look, we're friends!"
Weird Al: I don't carry them with me; that would be too easy. I got the Polaroids in a vault, my friend.
Nardwuar: Weird Al, Blowfly has a message for you. I contacted Blowfly and he has a message for you.
Weird Al: Let's hear it right now.
Nardwuar: This is Blowfly's message, Weird Al. "Al, would you do a split single with us and finally unite the two weird parody artists?"
Weird Al: He did not say that.
Nardwuar: Yes he did.
Weird Al: Let me see that.
Nardwuar: He did! Right there! [Nardwuar points to an email] I contacted Blowfly.
Weird Al: You're right!
Nardwuar: I contacted Blowfly! So would you like to address Blowfly at all?
Weird Al: Blowfly, have your peeps talk to my peeps. We'll do lunch.
Nardwuar: And weird artists will come together.
Weird Al: It could happen.
Nardwuar: That would be amazing.
Weird Al: That would be amazing!
Nardwuar: Now, Weird Al, are you familiar with journals at all? [Nardwuar pulls out a journal.]
Weird Al: Yes, I've seen journals like this. They have a lot of paper in them.
Nardwuar: Now this particular journal belongs to... who's journal is this?
Weird Al: It looks like Kurt Cobain's journals.
Nardwuar: Kurt Cobain's journals. And if you could open up to the anointed page

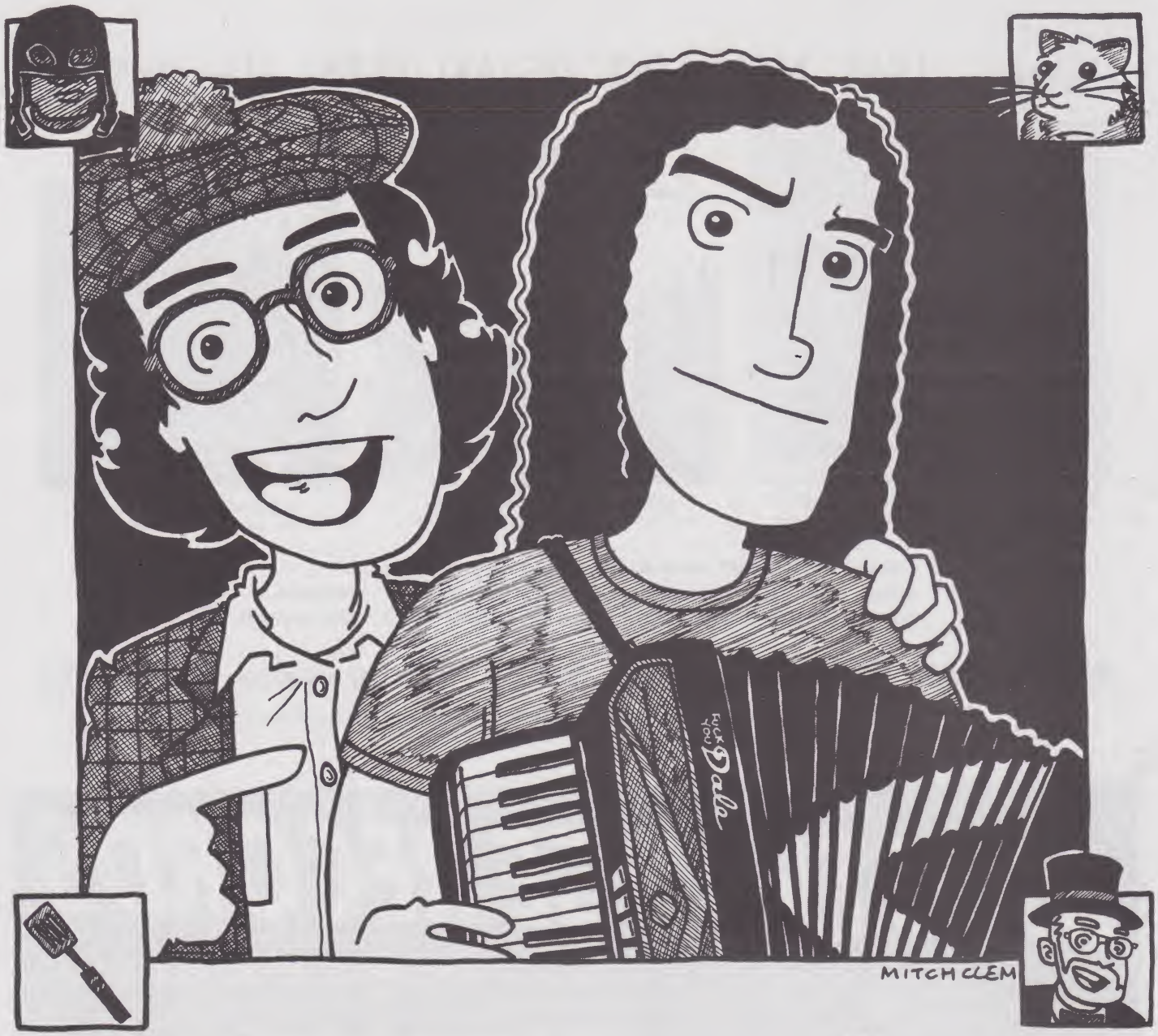

Illustration By Mitch Clem

there, please, Weird Al. This is Kurt Cobain's private journals.

Weird Al: Wow. Where did you get this?

Nardwuar: I got it in a bookstore. It's for sale. Everything's for sale!

Weird Al: Wow.

Nardwuar: Now if we could open up Kurt Cobain's journals there, Weird Al.

Weird Al: To the Post-It note?

Nardwuar: To the Post-It note. What do we see in there? I've indicated some things at the bottom. There's two things I'd like you to read at the bottom, Weird Al.

Weird Al: It says, oh…

Nardwuar: The first thing says…

Weird Al: It says—this is according to Kurt Cobain—here it says, "Eric Clapton plays dusty, second-rate blues licks." And under that it says, "Weird Al Yankovic is America's modern rock-pop genius." Whhaaat?!

Nardwuar: You made it into his journals, Weird Al!

Weird Al: Oh! That's pretty cool!

Nardwuar: In his private journals that I was perusing, I found out about Weird Al Yankovic little tidbits right here.

Weird Al: Eric Clapton, in your face!

Nardwuar: At the top of the page, "Weird Al," is scrawled right there.

Weird Al: Oh yeah, look at that. It says "Weird Al" right there on the page.

That's pretty cool.

Nardwuar: So you really didn't have too much interaction with Kurt Cobain, did you?

Weird Al: Uh, I talked to him on the phone and I hung out with him in a restaurant for about thirty-five seconds. And I…

Nardwuar: What restaurant, by the way?

Weird Al: It was somewhere on Fairfax Avenue in Los Angeles, one of those cool restaurants that's so hip it doesn't even have a name out front. And he was there with a bunch of people and I saw he was eating dinner there so I didn't want to bother him, but I walked over and said, "Hey Kurt, it's Al Yankovic, and thank you for letting me do 'Smells Like Nirvana.' And you know it meant a lot to me and I'll do anything you want me to do to show my appreciation." And he basically said, "Just polish my fingernails." And I did, I just polished his fingernails at the table, and he was very happy.

Nardwuar: But now you actually have proof there in the Nirvana journals.

Weird Al: I have proof. They're right here. Look, his actual journals.

Nardwuar: So, if people buy this, money will go to...

Weird Al: Oh look, it says [Al looks at writing on the book jacket] "Reward if found." Hey, there you go.

Nardwuar: Now, a few years ago I interviewed Chamillionaire.

Weird Al: You did?

Nardwuar: The rapper Chamillionaire.

Weird Al: I remember him.

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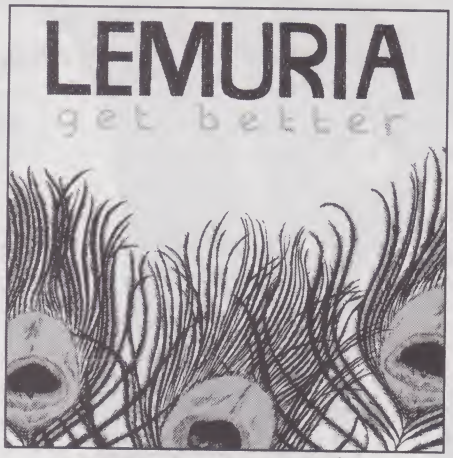

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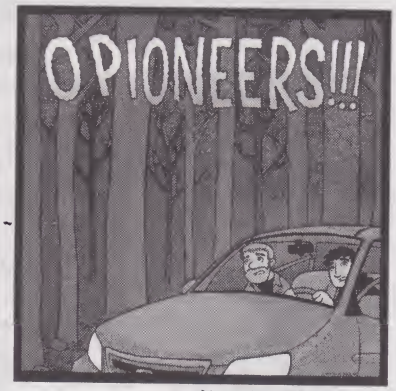

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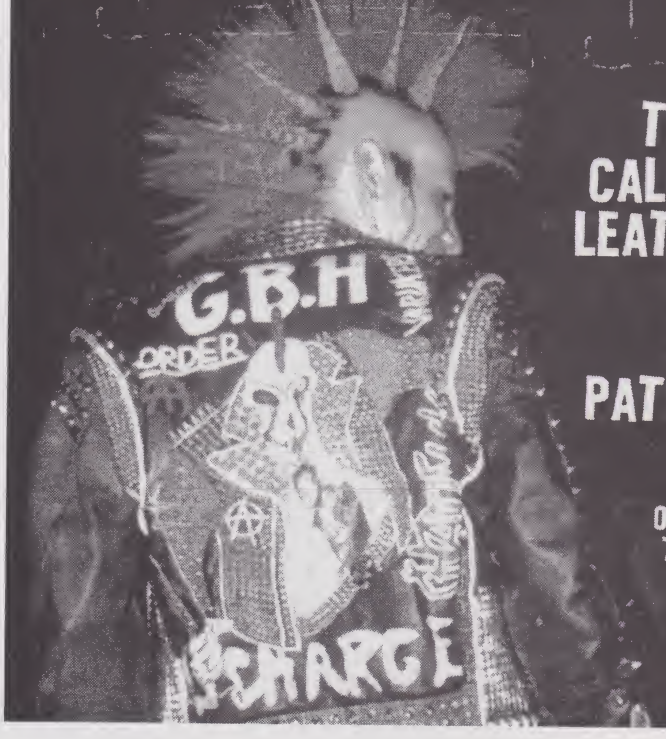

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Nardwuar: Yeah, your good buddy!
Weird Al: Yeah.
Nardwuar: Now, he was wearing a hat during the interview.
Weird Al: As are you.
Nardwuar: As am I. And I asked him if his hat was bulletproof and he denied it. Chamillionaire denied his hat was bulletproof.
Weird Al: He should never admit to something like that. 'Cause if somebody told me, like if you told me your hat was bulletproof, I'd put a cap in you right now just to check it out.
Nardwuar: So in your interactions with Chamillionaire, did you find out if he had a bulletproof hat? And do you have a bulletproof hat?
Weird Al: That never came up in discussion. We got to co-present at the American Music Awards and…
Nardwuar: Was he wearing a hat?
Weird Al: He wasn't wearing a hat, but if he had been wearing a hat, that would be my first question, obviously.
Nardwuar: Have you ever had a bulletproof hat? Would you consider that? Have you ever seen any bulletproof stuff?
Weird Al: Um, I don't think I've ever seen a bulletproof hat. What does it look like?
Nardwuar: Well I guess like the one that 50 Cent wears.
Weird Al: Is that really a bulletproof hat?
Nardwuar: I think he wears a bulletproof hat. They all have bulletproof hats. Maybe it's Lloyd Banks who wears the bulletproof hat. Are you down with the G-Unit?
Weird Al: I am down with the G-Unit, G.
Nardwuar: Weird Al Yankovic: opening acts. I've looked at the opening acts you've had on some of your tours and some of them have been pretty interesting. For instance, I saw a bill, "Weird Al," comma," chainsaw carving."
Weird Al: Yeah. I think that was on this tour. You know we played…
Nardwuar: …In Utah.
Weird Al: We play an occasional state fair, so it's like, we'll be billed next to the chainsaw carvers. You know, "Weird Al and tractor pull."
Nardwuar: Have there been any other things? Puppet shows? What have you played with over the years? Who opens for Weird Al? Does anybody open for Weird Al and cover for Weird Al before Weird Al can come up on stage?
Weird Al: We used to have all sorts of opening acts. For this show, it's an "evening with Al," 'cause the show's almost two-and-a-half-hours long.
Nardwuar: Except the chainsaw carving.
Weird Al: Except that was on a whole different stage. But there's only so much weirdness people can take in any given finite amount of time. So we figure that's enough for now.
Nardwuar: Weird Al, I was asking you about Blowfly. And, you know, people don't want to get confused between you and Blowfly. But isn't there an entire website out there called, "Not Al's Songs"? Like, people get confused. Every parody song is not written by you, or is it, Al?
Weird Al: Well…
Nardwuar: You want to take credit for that?
Weird Al: Yeah, I know. Well, the truth is, it's not. I've been around for so long that anytime anybody hears a parody of a song they go, "Oh! Must be Weird Al Yankovic." And so I get a lot of credit on those peer-to-peer file sharing sites.
Nardwuar: What particular songs have you been impressed by? The songs you've taken credit for—which really maybe you shouldn't take credit for—that people yell from the audience?
Weird Al: Who does it? There's Bob Rivers and Mark Davis. There's a few people who actually do quality stuff and, you know, if it's good, sure I'll take credit for it. But you know, 98% of the stuff out there that's got my name on it that isn't really by me isn't really so good. You know what I mean? You do know what I mean, don't you?
Nardwuar: I do, Weird Al. Now winding up here, who is and who are the Harry Fox Agency?
Weird Al: Uh, Harry Fox Agency would be an agency wherein songs would be cleared. So if you need to clear a song for a cover version, you just call up Harry and go, "Harry, come on! Work with me here. Work with me Harry! Harry!"
Nardwuar: After all these years, do you get a good deal with Harry?
Weird Al: You know, Harry and I, we're sorta like this: East side!
Nardwuar: Weird Al, pirates are big these days, aren't they? Pirates are big.
Weird Al: They're huge! They're large.
Nardwuar: What sort of pirates are you integrating into your act, Weird Al?
Weird Al: Um, you know, it's subliminal pirates. I don't want to be too obvious or overt about my inclusion of pirates in the live show. So, in fact, we offer a cash reward to somebody who could spot the pirate.
Nardwuar: I was wondering: a concertina. What is a concertina? And would you ever integrate a concertina into your act? I'm calling it your "act." Are you insulted by that, Weird Al?
Weird Al: I am, but please continue to do so. A concertina is similar to an accordion, although most concertinas have buttons on both sides. I only usually play buttons on the left side and play the keyboard on the right side. But with a concertina I would be playing buttons on both sides and that would be—did I spit on you? I'm very sorry.
Nardwuar: No you didn't. I was going to say that's very pirate-ish of you. Pirates love the concertina, don't they?
Weird Al: They did. And you know, I'm more apt to incorporate a parrot into my act than a concertina, 'cause a concertina, that's just too many buttons. Too many buttons, my friend.
Nardwuar: You're Weird.
Weird Al: Al.
Nardwuar: Yank.
Weird Al: O.
Nardwuar: Vic. Now Weird Al, you wouldn't be Weird Al without Dr. Demento in some ways, right? Dr. Demento is why you are here today.
Weird Al: In some ways, yeah. You could probably say that. If Dr. Demento had never existed, I would be living in an alternate reality.
Nardwuar: From the guy who brought you "Fish Heads," he brings you Weird Al. Who else has Dr. Demento brought to the world? You, Weird Al. And what about the "Fish Head?" Tell us about the "Fish Heads." The "Fish Heads!"
Weird Al: The Fish Head is Barnes And Barnes. Art Barnes and Artie Barnes. And actually Art Barnes, a.k.a. Bill Moomie, is the guy who's little Will Robinson on *Lost in Space*. And he's the guy who introduced me to my wife. So everything's interconnected, the fabric of reality, it blows my mind.
Nardwuar: When you were on the *Tom Snyder* show; your drummer's the same drummer you have today, right?
Weird Al: It is, and I should point out that today, I don't know when this is printing, but today, this very day, September 14, 2007, today, is the twenty-seventh anniversary of me meeting John Bermuda Shorts, my drummer.
Nardwuar: It's amazing, looking at footage of him. What is he playing on the *Tom Snyder* show? It's like he's doing all these weird noises and pounding on something. What is that? What did you do back then?
Weird Al: That was my accordion case, my friend. He was on the floor, on his knees, banging on my accordion case, squeaking bulb horns, blowing into siren whistles and duck calls, and just being really silly. I had no idea he was going to do that. And he made a real fool out of himself.
Nardwuar: Weird Al, you mentioned Kenny G right off of the top of the interview. Would you consider him replacing Michael Richards in *UHF Part II*, the sequel?
Weird Al: You know, I've got a call into Kenny G as we speak. We'll see if the long-standing feud has cooled down and see if he's willing to take over the role of Stanley Spadowski.
Nardwuar: Now, if you've noticed, we have this little poster of fabulous poodles up behind us. Are there not poodles in *UHF*?
Weird Al: There are poodles in *UHF*, poodles that can fly or attempt to fly.
Nardwuar: Or get thrown off sundecks.
Weird Al: Or that, yes.
Nardwuar: That's what we brought this here for you today. *Think Pink*, The Fabulous Poodles!
Weird Al: Very nice.
Nardwuar: Will there be any poodles tonight at the gig, Weird Al?
Weird Al: Uh, the pirates are holding poodles under their arms. So look for those as well.
Nardwuar: With the concertina.
Weird Al: Yes.
Nardwuar: Well, thanks so much Weird Al. Anything else you want to add to the people out there at all?
Weird Al: Yes. [silence]
Nardwuar: Why should people care about Weird Al Yankovic?
Weird Al: I don't know. Because I floss regularly and I think dental hygiene is very important.
Nardwuar: Well, thanks so much Weird Al. Keep on rockin' in the free world and doot doola doot doo…
Weird Al: Doo da looda do da!
Nardwuar: Almost. Doot doola doot doo…
Weird Al: Doo Doo!

To hear this interview hop to...
www.nardwuar.com

"Suffice it to say, whatever Ricky yelled, it was idiotic and ill-advised."

THE MYSTERY DUDE AND THE GALAXIE

I don't know why I was there, and I don't mean this in the philosophical, why-are-any-of-us-here? sense or the self-analytical, how-do-I-get-myself-into-messes-like-these? sense. I just mean that, for the better part of that decade, I ingested so many things that were bad for my brain that my short-term memory then suffered and my long-term memory now suffers. I can reconstruct it, though. I can make suppositions and rely on patterns of what I remember about my past behavior and come back with a pretty good sense of why and when and what all happened.

I was hanging out with Ricky, which, in and of itself, is curious. Ricky was (and let's face it, still is) one of those guys who it's better to not hang out with. One of those guys who made it into the crew somehow and you hang out with him not so much because you like him—and I'm still not sure who liked Ricky—but because he's there and either no one has asked him to leave or plenty of people have asked him to leave and he's still there. So why was I hanging out with Ricky, just him and me?

I guess that's the first thing I'm trying to figure out.

It was summer. At least, I assume that and it's a pretty safe bet, seeing as how we're talking about Florida, here. Since summertime in Florida lasts from early March to late November, it's typically a safe bet to assume it was summer. And when things happened at times other than summer, I remember at least that I wasn't suffocating in that wet blanket of steam rising up from the Florida swamps. And on this day with Ricky, I remember sitting in his car, windows down, sweating balls. We were in the Taco Bell drive-through. That's another curious thing for two reasons. One, even in those hazy days of poverty and alcohol abuse, I never let myself get so poor or so drunk that I ate at Taco Bell. Save your rat meat tacos and bean-flavored, fryer fat burritos for someone else. And two, I hate drive-throughs like you wouldn't believe. I mean, you didn't have to farm for the food, hunt for it, clean it, prep it, cook it, or even put that shit on a plate. The least you could do is get your ass out of the car, walk up to the counter, and pick it up yourself.

There's a better-than-average chance that I was explaining both of these things to Ricky. Maybe this is what got him so fired up. Maybe it was the summertime heat. Maybe it had something to do with being drunk in the afternoon. More than likely it was all of these things sitting on top of the basic fact that Ricky was, well, a dick. But as we sat there, idling in his little car, waiting for a bag full of what Ricky was prepared to call food, Ricky leaned across me in the passenger seat and hollered out the passenger window, "Show us your tits!"

I'm playing the law of averages here. Typically, when Ricky yelled out the window at young women, he yelled, "Show us your tits!" There's also a possibility, though it's less probable, that he yelled either, "They're all whores!" Which he occasionally yelled at young women. Or he could possibly have been drunk enough to whittle his wit down to the monosyllabic, "Whore!" or, "Cunt!" These things happened at times when you hung out with Ricky.

Suffice it to say, whatever Ricky yelled, it was idiotic and ill-advised. I was not pleased to be sitting next to the window from which the insult originated. I was reminded of why I try to never, ever hang out with Ricky.

I'm still not sure why I'd chosen to hang out with him on this particular summer afternoon—maybe the drinks were on him.

I remember the young woman being attractive, despite her face being twisted into a look that you would expect on the face of any reasonable human who'd been assaulted by such a comment. Her boyfriend was angry. Justifiably so. He yelled back something along the lines of, "Why don't you come over here and say that?"

The boyfriend was a small guy. Since Ricky wasn't a small guy and I wasn't either, I guess Ricky thought it was a good idea to follow up on this matter. He got his food from the window. That part, I'm certain of. He waited for his food, placed the bag in the space between his seat and mine, then pulled down the block to call the boyfriend out on his threat.

I'm not sure exactly what ran through my mind, other than I wanted to stay out of it. Because I knew this about Ricky: if I stayed out of it, he was likely to lose. Ricky was living proof that you could fight often and never get any better at it. He was also living proof that fighting doesn't work. Often, Ricky would be around and someone would express the notion that someone should beat the shit out of him. Really knock some sense into him. But I'd seen more than one person beat the shit out of Ricky. Maybe I did it myself a time or two when we were kids. Who am I kidding? Of course I did. And I'm here to tell you it doesn't work. You cannot use your fists to knock sense into someone.

So Ricky pulled down the side street to fight this girl's boyfriend and I sat in the passenger seat and the boyfriend and girlfriend stood on the sidewalk across the street from where Ricky parked and Ricky opened his car door and put one foot on the ground and I don't know where this fourth dude came from, but next thing me or Ricky knew, this dude was on the scene. He jumped on the hood of Ricky's car and started banging the heal of his boot into Ricky's windshield. The windshield cracked and spidered into a complex web of breaking but not shattered glass. Ricky swung his foot back into the car and started the engine. The mystery dude hopped off the hood and grabbed Ricky's door. Ricky tried to slam the door shut. Mystery dude ripped it out of Ricky's hand and yanked the door against the hinges, really fucking it up. The boyfriend, swelled with the confidence of his buddy's initial attack, started coming across the street to join in.

As for me, I don't know why. I don't know what I was thinking. Maybe it was that choking Florida heat or the stench of a Taco Bell bag or the amalgamation of an afternoon spent guzzling good, old-fashioned whiskey. Maybe I was, well, a dick. Maybe I just found this mystery dude to be an affront to my masculinity, but I got involved.

I jumped out of the car and ran around the front and came after the mystery dude. He paused from ripping Ricky's door near off its hinges and faced me. We both had a moment of recognition in which we realized that we were entering into an unfair fight. Or maybe we didn't have that moment. Maybe I've just inserted that moment into my memory so that you can pause and understand that this mystery dude was just a kid, eighteen or nineteen at the oldest. I was somewhere in my mid-twenties. I can't pinpoint the exact year. And I can't say how much bigger I was than the mystery dude, or how much smaller he was than me. Either way, it was easy for me to grab him by his T-shirt, lift him off his feet, and sling him onto the hood of the car. I was even able to hold him there, his back on the hood, his feet off the ground, his two

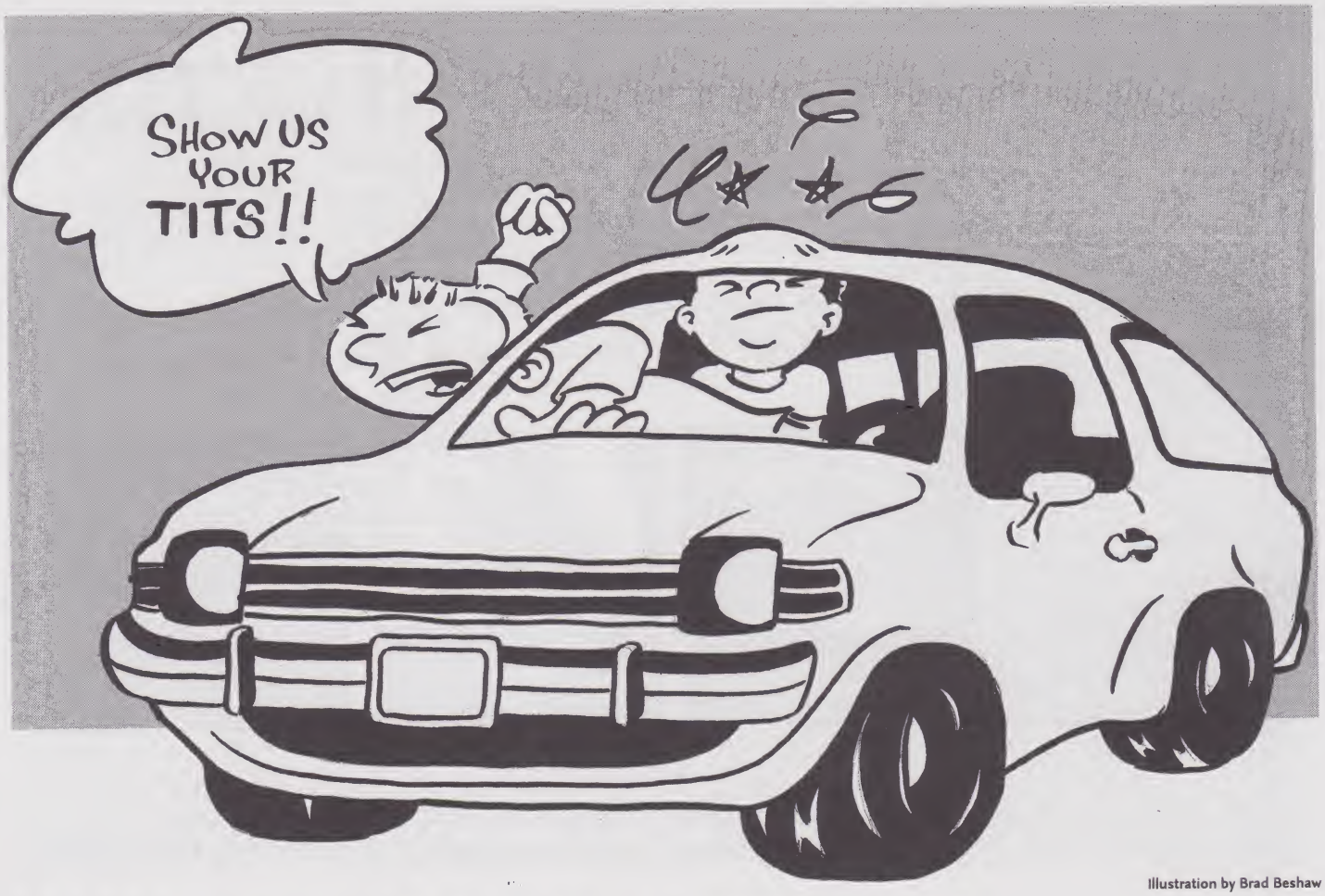

Illustration by Brad Beshaw

I'M HERE TO TELL YOU IT DOESN'T WORK. YOU CANNOT USE YOUR FISTS TO KNOCK SENSE INTO SOMEONE.

hands wrapped around my left wrist, and my left hand pinning him down by the throat. My right hand was free to punch him, but I didn't. Instead, I said something to Ricky along the lines of, "Are you gonna do something?"

I could hear the girlfriend across the street, screaming at me to let the mystery dude go. The boyfriend paused where he was in the middle of the street. Ricky said, "Let him go."

"Are you fucking kidding me?" I must have asked.

And this I remember very clearly. Ricky screamed it at me. "Let him go!"

As if I were in real danger.

If I were, I don't know how. The boyfriend stood frozen, unarmed. The girlfriend screamed, thirty feet away. And the mystery dude just kept turning purpler and purpler in the face. But danger or not, this wasn't my fight. I grabbed the mystery dude by his T-shirt again, lifted him, and slung him off the hood of the car. His feet hit the ground but he didn't fall. He stumbled into a sprint and took off. The boyfriend and girlfriend ran away, too. Ricky did what he could to shut his car door, but he still had to hang on to it to keep it closed. He drove back to the Taco Bell, and, genius that he was, he used the pay phone to call the police.

I don't remember exactly what I did for the next fifteen minutes. I probably either kept my mouth shut or made fun of Ricky. Most likely, I kept my mouth shut. And somewhere in there, I must have had the good sense to call a friend, knowing that I wanted to be out of there before the cops showed up. I do remember Ricky looking at his car door hanging akimbo and his shattered windshield sagging down, saying, "Damn, I'd like to get my hands on that son of a bitch."

I remember, also, the cops showing up, and calling me over to ask me a question, asking me what went wrong with the drug deal and just at the moment, an ancient, white Ford Galaxie glided through the parking lot. I'm not sure if it was Toby's Galaxie at that point or if he'd given it to Tommy already. Either way, Toby and Tommy were sure to be in the front seats. I may have uttered a denial to the cop or I may have just silently wandered away.

But this I remember, clear as day: I glided into the back seat of that Galaxie, unscathed and armed with a new story. Rocket From The Crypt was playing, "Ditchdigger." It had to be because every time I hear that song, flashes of that misspent afternoon light up in my brain. I see and feel the moments like I'm there all over again.

And I wouldn't mind being back in the backseat of that Galaxie, on the way to the bar with Tommy and Toby, as we inevitably were at that moment.

–Sean Carswell

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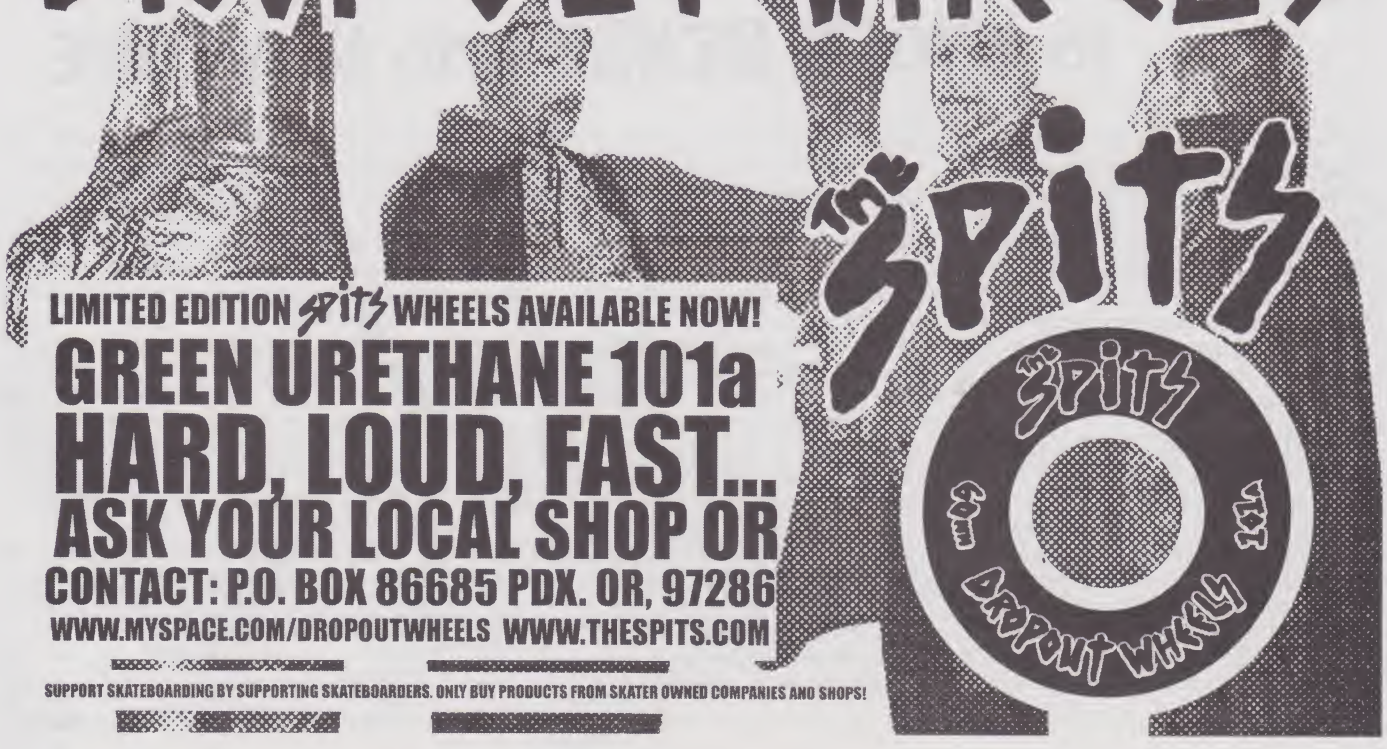

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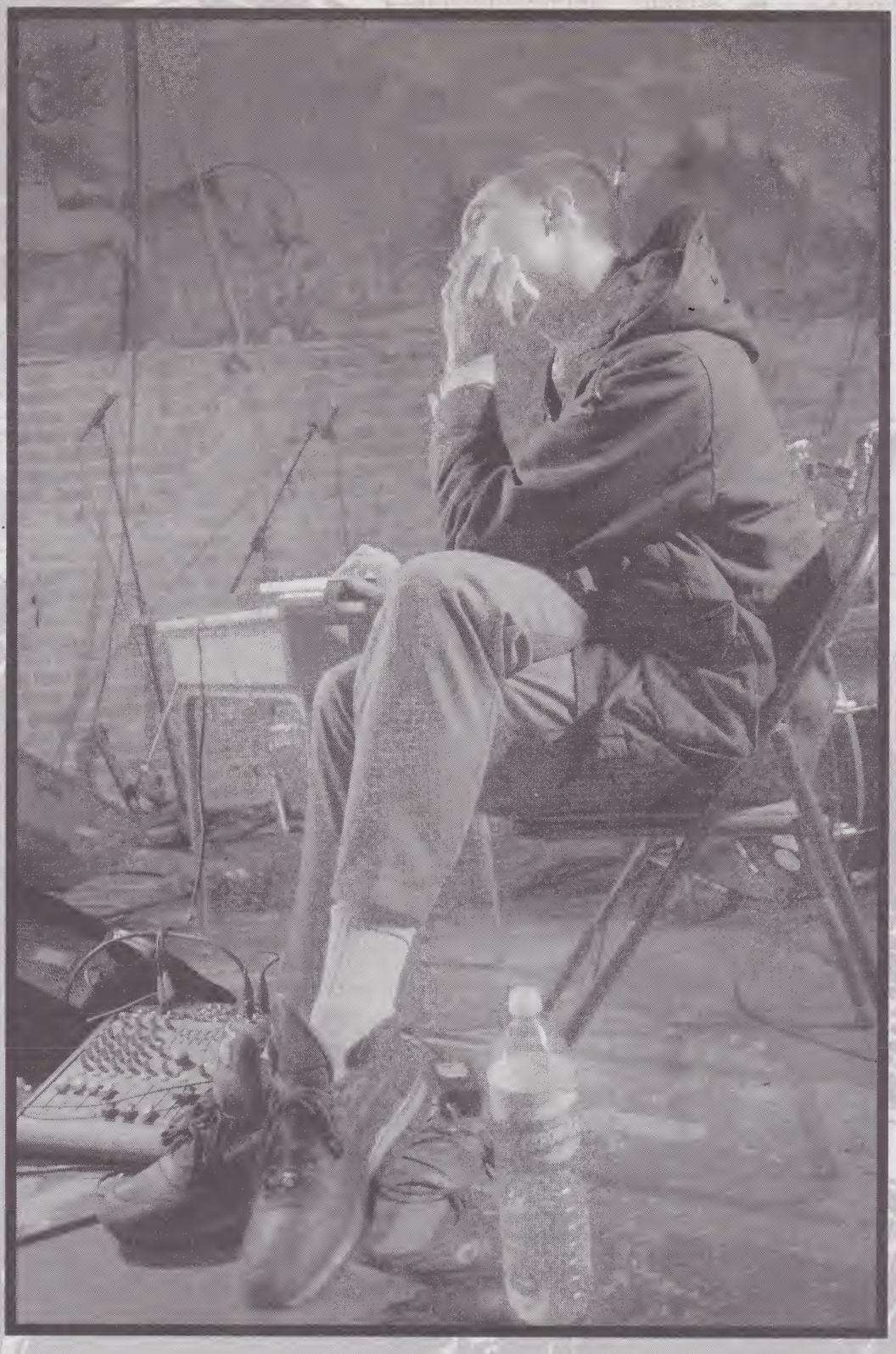


Dan Monick's Photo Page

BARR watching the Smell turn 10, 01/06/08

Los ILLEGALS Part 1

Vexed and Asco in El Lay:

An Interview with Willie Herrón and Jesus "Xiuy" Velo of Los Illegals

Interview By: Jimmy Alvarado / Layout By: Daryl Gussin

Photos courtesy of the band unless noted.

Trying to encapsulate the history of Los Illegals in a few short sentences is about as easy as building a working rocket engine out of Jell-O. Over their three decades of existence—with essentially the same core lineup of vocalist/keyboardist Willie Herrón, guitarist Tony Valdez, bassist Jesus "Xiuy" Velo, and drummer Bill Reyes intact—they've played stadium, club, and museum alike; been featured in films, books, and documentaries; collaborated with poets, artists, and musicians, including Concrete Blonde and members of legendary Mexican rock band Maldita Vecindad; their single, "El Lay," is considered a Chicano rock classic; they remain the only East L.A. punk-oriented band to release an album on a major label, and even got Bowie sidekick Mick Ronson to produce it. They have also recently created a music academy, Vex AD, to mentor local bands and help them succeed in the music world.

All this says nothing of the storied Herrón himself, who, like me, hails from a picturesque little armpit of East L.A. known as City Terrace. In addition to fronting Los Illegals, he is a world-famous muralist and former member—along with fellow noted artists Gronk, Patssi Valdez, and Harry Gamboa, Jr.—of the Chicano artist collective Asco ("nausea" in Spanish). Beginning in the early 1970s, years before the Hollywood punk scene got its groove going, Asco quickly moved from collaborating on drawings for a Chicano art magazine called Regeneración to terrorizing East L.A. and the greater art world with confrontational performance and conceptual art pieces. While some of Asco's more infamous pranks—like spray-painting their names on the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (in retaliation for one of the museum's curators saying telling Gamboa "Chicanos don't make art, they join gangs." By "signing" it, they made the museum itself the first piece Chicano art ever displayed there), *The Stations of the Cross* (wherein they protested the Vietnam War by parading down a major East L.A. street as a "walking mural" amidst torrents of verbal abuse from confused locals), making "instant murals" by taping each other to walls, and creating the "No Movie," which involved photographed scenes from films that didn't exist—are still being dissected by cognoscenti the world over. Their influence on the Chicano avant-garde is apparent, their brash tactics, savvy media skills, and willingness to slaughter even the Chicano Movement's most sacred cows caused much friction between them and their peers.

Most L.A. punks, however, would best remember a club founded by Herrón and Joe Suquette called The Vex, a venue crucial to the scene's history. Starting out on the second floor of a local arts center run by a Catholic nun, The Vex brought the East and West L.A. undergrounds together, providing a chance for local acts like The Brat, Thee Undertakers, The Stains, Violent Children, and The Warriors to gig with Black Flag, Wall Of Voodoo, X, and countless others. Although a riot at a Black Flag show closed the original location, the club continued on in a number of other locations until 1984.

Like Asco, Los Illegals have long been misunderstood, loathed, and dismissed by many, either for being too "new wave," too artsy, or too political. Resistant to the constrictive "punk" label, they are nevertheless an integral part of the history of Los Angeles' musical underground that lays waste to the long-propagated fallacy that nothing interesting happened outside of Hollywood, and they remain as outspoken and opinionated as ever.

Photo by Jimmy Alvarado

To me, the "punks" that I related to were the cholos driving by with fuckin' shotguns, not the people in Hollywood

Jimmy: Where were you born and raised?
Willie: I was born right there on Humphreys and Floral (streets) in East L.A., at Santa Marta Hospital. That's where I was born, and at the time I lived in (the city of) Pico Rivera. I sort of spent some of my elementary school years in Pico Rivera, and then moved to Ford and Dozier (streets in East L.A.), where my grandparents had a Mexican bakery before the Pomona Freeway was built.
Jimmy: And what was your family background?
Willie: Well, on my mom's side, my grandmother's American Indian and my grandfather is from Chihuahua, Mexico. He came in the 1920s. On my dad's side, they had a lot of generations in Albuquerque, New Mexico. They were part Spanish, from Spain, on my grandmother's side, and on my grandfather's side, he was Scottish Irish, and that's where O'Herron comes from. It's O'Herron, and in Nuevo Mexico they dropped the "O" and the apostrophe and they just made it "Herrón."
Jimmy: So, was it with one "R" or with two?
Willie: Double "R."
Jimmy: So it's not like the bird, then.
Willie: It's like the bird, yeah, because the name O'Herron originates from North Umberland, Scotland, and it's where the herons were in the swamps.
Jimmy: What was the social/political climate of the area that you were raised in?
Willie: I was basically raised in Maravilla Projects, right there across from the handball courts, and then I remember still in elementary school moving to Estrada Courts. I grew up in low-income housing projects, pretty much almost all the way into half of middle school.
Jimmy: So it was pretty much a precarious existence, then.
Willie: Yeah. Shortly thereafter, still in elementary school, I went to live and travel the United States for a couple of years with my uncle, who was in the army, and there was no difference between the housing projects in East L.A. and the barracks and the type of housing that I was accustomed to living in with my uncle while we were traveling from different army bases throughout the United States. They were pretty much the same; they reminded me a lot of military housing, so it was that kind of coexistence, just existing. So it was the typical stuff in East L.A., shootings and gangs and graffiti. It was pretty tough growing up in the housing projects, versus when we got our own home in middle school and we started to live in neighborhoods where there were houses. That seemed a lot better than living in housing projects when I grew up in the '50s.
Jimmy: And how did you end up in City Terrace?

The Plugz

Willie: My grandfather relocated to City Terrace and brought his bakery over here, and then, little by little, with the profits all my aunts, who all worked at the bakery and drove bakery trucks, they all started buying houses here in City Terrace. And that's when we all started to be a family from City Terrace, all my aunts and my cousins, and we all grew up here.

Jimmy: How did this upbringing—the environment you were raised in—how did it feed into Asco? Do you feel it kind of led to your involvement with Asco?

Willie: Yeah, I think it led to having this strong feeling as a child of being, uh, coexisting, but still feeling very segregated, separate from a lot of other people; not really feeling like I could have friends and like I could be like a community person. I really felt like I had to develop some sort of a defense mechanism other than using violence to feel secure, because of everything that seemed violent that was going on around me while I was growing up. So I chose to be very flamboyant and I just dove into that whole androgyny thing. I would have no identity. I could be this almost alien type of individual. I felt that that would protect me more than to be like everybody else, to dress like the gang members, or to hang out. And you also have to keep in mind that both of my younger brothers gravitated to the typical, so they were cholos, they were gang members, they did the tattoos, they did everything that was pretty typical at the time.

Jimmy: They were from CT (a local street gang)?

Willie: They were from CT, and I chose the long, different-colored hair, streaking, shaving eyebrows, platforms, glitter gloves, making my own clothes and just really wanting to not be judged by them. I got the "chavala" ("little girl," but essentially meaning "sissy" when used toward boys) thing a lot. I grew up with that and a lot of my friends did, too, but we knew how to handle it. It wasn't like anything that knocked us down, or that would piss us off or hurt us. We just cracked up and we said, "Yeah, you would call us that," or, "You don't understand," and that would be it. But we did sort of generate enthusiasm, I think, with the more creative thinking type of people. I remember my upbringing and everything I experienced in the neighborhood sort of led me to start to think creatively, to think of revenge when a friend of mine got either jumped or stabbed. Lots of my friends were cholos, so when that would happen to them, I would feel a satisfaction of revenge by painting a very violent painting—faces screaming, people punching each other and blood flying out of their mouths. To me, lots of my drawings really were a reflection of what my homeboys were going through. I felt like I gravitated to those themes and those ideas, of gang warfare and things like that, probably also because my both my brothers were in gangs.

Jimmy: So, for you, the Asco thing was a way of getting back at the environment you found yourself in the middle of.

Willie: Yeah, and not having too much power to change it. It was almost like a helpless feeling. So that gave me more strength and more power, I think, to be different, to do those things that just seemed wild and seemed crazy. There was always that possibility that it would get you more into a fight, because you were looked at like gay, or queer, or chavala, right? So it seemed risky; but at the same time, the way it worked for me is that they left me alone, because they said, "Oh, he's an artist. Oh, you should see his stuff, it's really cool." And then so the cholo dudes would already know me as this weird artist dude from City Terrace.

Jimmy: That's really interesting, because when we were growing up in City Terrace, like you're saying, we also got the chavala thing. Walking down the street, if you had your head shaved, they fucked with you. If you had your pants pegged, they fucked with you. If you had a certain color T-shirt on, they fucked with you. But you guys were walking around in fuckin' platforms!

Willie: Yeah, with fuckin' leather silver cups. We'd spray-paint our combat boots gold. You know, we were just like... we were like a Chicano Kiss.

Jimmy: [laughs] I was gonna say, like a very Bowie kinda thing. So, in a nutshell, if you had to describe what Asco was, what was it?

Willie: We were a group of artists who were trying to find new ways, non-stereotypical formats, to reinterpret our environment and reinterpret the things that were most harmful to our race—in our opinion—and harmful to us as well. Just reconfiguring, reinventing, and re-presenting it in a completely different way, and so a lot of it was driven by the things that we all experienced, by the things that we all shared, the things we had in

common with each other. We would take those typical things—almost like taking the can of Campbell's Soup and Warhol gives it a completely different look—it's something that's so second nature it affects us, and just taking it and reinterpreting and re-presenting it. And lots of times they were very misunderstood perspectives. We would get that real typical.... I mean, half of the screams I remember hearing from people down Whittier Boulevard when we did the *Stations of the Cross*, which was our first public performance, was "putos," ("faggots") over and over and over and over. We heard people just screaming out the windows, "Putos! Fuck you putos!" Shit like that, instead of like, "Wow, what are these cats up to?" You know? And I guess it wasn't even like anything sacrilegious in terms of a reaction, because who's ever seen a Jesus Christ with his face painted like a skull walking down the street, carrying a big fifteen-foot cross?

Jimmy: Why do you think they were so threatened by it?

Willie: I don't know. That's a good one, because even twenty years later, it seemed like our Chicano neighbors still seemed threatened. The one comment we (Los Illegals) used to get a lot in the late '70s/ early '80s, because we used to sing some of our tunes in Spanish, was "wetbacks." From our own neighbors. They would call us wetbacks 'cause we weren't singing in English. We grew up speaking both languages. We weren't confused as far as that. We knew that we were in the United States. We knew we were American, and we knew we were Mexican, too, and that our family was also from Mexico. We're so many generations in the United States already. It wasn't like we came from Mexico and we were born there and now we're here playing music, you know, 'cause maybe we wouldn't have sung in both languages, but a second-nature element of our existence was both languages, so we wrote that way. We predominantly sang in English on our first record, but still there were things that we weren't afraid to do in that song ("El Lay") that was really part of our upbringing and part of our culture, and that was to sing some of the words in Spanish. We didn't care if they called us wetbacks or mojados or whatever. That's their problem, just like they would say, "Hey, chavala" at a party or something and they wanted to kick our ass. "Well, that's your problem. That's not my problem."

Jimmy: Speaking of the performance art, I know that initially what you guys were drawing were collaborative art pieces and stuff. How did you move from that to performance art?

Willie: It was parallel, because as we would get together and we would do our pen and ink drawings for *Regeneración*, which was a very conscious, graphic, reproductive awareness—we knew if we do all these lines and we do 'em tight and we do 'em very precise, it's gonna reproduce the best instead of doing something too loose and too interpretive by a camera; we just felt it was the best way to express ourselves—but in the process of producing these graphic drawings, we always talked about things we were gonna be doing the following week, ideas we were going to be putting as performance art and how we were going to stage them. I remember meeting Gronk for the first time, and Harry also, because I used to... I guess for a while I hung around with Patssi Valdez and we dated a little bit while we were both going to Garfield (High School), and she invited me to a performance that Gronk, Cyclona (another Chicano performance artist) and a couple of other local artists were having at Belvedere Park. So when I went and I saw them with balloons filled with paint, popping them on themselves, and two or three people inside of this big plastic bag that was all steamed up and they were moving around like this big blob onstage and doing all this stuff, I just felt like that these were cats that we could really hang out with and really come up with these strange ideas to go just even further out, to really just even inspire ourselves. One thing that was very difficult, I think, and it still is, is to attach yourself with a group of people that constantly bring the best out of you, or that take you to the next level, just constantly reinventing some other way. You talk about current events and then somebody says something that then inspires one of the other members, and then we were just bouncing off each other and we'd say, "Okay." We would pick a date and everyone would show up in their costumes and we would do this performance based on having conversations while we're drawing for the magazine.

Jimmy: So, when you guys were doing these things, were you intentionally saying, "Okay,

let's do this conceptual art piece," or were you saying, "Let's go fuck with somebody. Let's go outside and stage this event just to kinda create a ruckus in the neighborhood"?

Willie: Well, I think that the cool thing about Asco was that there were some of us who didn't approach what they did from an intellectual perspective, and then there were others in the group that everything had to be funneled through and siphoned and the end result had to be an intellectual writing, an intellectual perspective, a way to explain it, and sometimes all of it was spontaneous energy. We would just do it and later we would sit down, have a talk about it, and say, "Now we're gonna conceptualize what the fuck we just did." [laughs] So things did happen that way, and I thank God they happened that way, because a lot of it was gut feeling and a lot of it didn't make sense to us, but it seemed appropriate to do it and to do it the way that we were doing it. A lot of it was just being so conscious of not wanting to produce something that was expected and that was staying away from the stereotypical. Even in our collaborative mural efforts, we wanted to just stay away from the Virgen de Guadalupes, the Zapatas, the Pancho Villas, and everything that everyone else was painting—no lowriders in our paintings—and those kinds of things just led us to look at even things that were happening at the border and things that the United States was involved with in other countries and stuff, so we ventured out of the neighborhood a lot, too, with our concepts and then we would bring it in and incorporate it with something that was relative to the community.

Jimmy: Making the assumption that the general themes in Chicano art at the time were the Virgen de Guadalupe, Che Guevara, that kind of stuff, why did you think Asco's voice was a necessary addition to that? What do you think you were bringing to the table?

Willie: The first thing I think of is this mezclado ("mixed") perspective, a perspective that intertwines a bunch of ideas. Rather than it being solely one seed, it was seeds from different individuals with a similar upbringing, in a similar geographic area, but the fact that we were not all pure Mexican, we weren't all pure Spanish, we weren't all pure Italian, we weren't all pure anything, we were consciously bringing all those different experiences and melting them together and making a hybrid, making just this idea that didn't seem that common among our fellow artists during that period. To me, it seemed like we (Chicanos) were more dominated by this whole Pre-Columbian notion that that's where everything has to come from, and we (Asco) were trying to stay away from that. We were trying to bring in the Euro, bring in the Asian.... I mean, lots of times, my first mural in '71, *The Plumed Serpent*, was coined as being sort of Mexican-Asian, like that's a dragon. It's a Japanese dragon. Those kinds of things we were really conscious of. My neighbors were Japanese and City Terrace, when I moved there in 1960, there were probably twenty to thirty times as many Jews as there are now, and even more Japanese, and right now there's still a lot of Japanese here. So from that combo and that consciousness, I don't think there were a lot of Chicanos who were doing that. They were staying real pre-Columbian, or everything had to be Mexican. And we were mixing in the Bowie-esque, the Euro, how would you say... I guess it was the flavor, mixing it all in.

Jimmy: One of the things I keep seeing that recurs in the information I've been able to find about Asco is that you guys weren't well received in either the Chicano or the mainstream art circles, or you were ignored by both, but I can't find any specific criticisms. What were some of the specific things that they were saying about you guys?

Willie: Well, I really couldn't tell you much about what was actually being printed, because I think if we would've been in print, that would've been better than just hearing stuff on the street, or hearing people talk about us at the art openings, like when we went and we sort of sabotaged the Los Four exhibit at the L.A. County Art Museum (the

Thee Undertakers Photo by Diane Gamboa

If you're going to say "fuck you" to society in general and the status quo, you've got to say "fuck you" to yourself and the people around you.

first official exhibition of Chicano art at the museum, featuring work by another East L.A. collective) and then we tagged (the museum). You're gonna find that in print, but it's like one person wrote about it and everybody just goes to that and they just say the same thing and keep repeating it. No one really does what you're doing—comes and talks to us and gets a fresh perspective of anything that we actually did. The few things that got out just keep getting published over and over and people keep rehashing basically the same information, so there's not a lot of it that's out there that's really that derogatory.

Jimmy: So what kind of criticisms did you get?

Willie: Oh, we got criticisms like, when we actually did that (crashed the Los Four exhibit), it was like we have a problem because we weren't the ones who got the exhibit, so we have to go and show everybody up by painting our faces blue, because we lack attention, we're insecure, so we have to go there and we have show everybody up, like "Look at me." So a lot of it was the jealousy, a lot of the reactions....

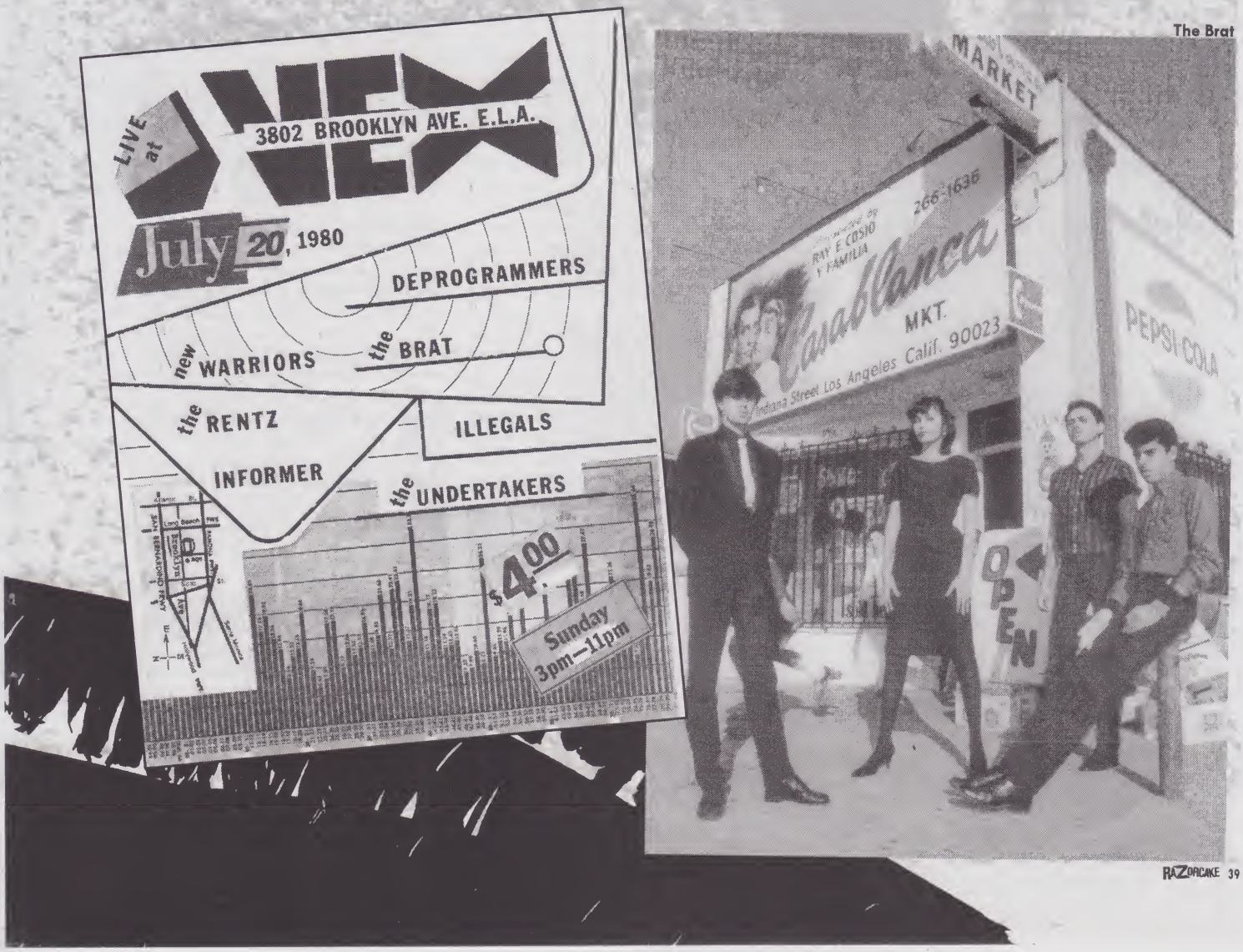
Jimmy: On your part or on their part?

Willie: It was on their part, I think, because we were doing something that nobody else had the balls to do, and that was just to be different just for the sake of being different, but then we were able to explain it and put it into a perspective that, to this day, now makes a lot of sense. But then, it wasn't about making sense. It was just about doing it to be different and doing it so we could say that we were not like them, even though we're brothers, but we have a different perspective, and our perspective is just as valid.

Jimmy: Were there any Chicano artists outside of the group who you felt a kinship with, or who you thought were saying important things?

Willie: I think that without having any real concrete analysis, because I don't usually spend my time trying to go there and figure stuff out, I think that there was a group of artists that we did have something to do (with) in terms of inspiring them almost simultaneously. You started getting artists that I think were coming out of the perspective that seemed more typical and they were starting to look at art in a more theatrical kind of way as well, like Guillermo Gomez-Peña. I didn't hear of him until after Asco had broken up. He was probably around doing stuff, but it seemed like his stuff started to get a bit more edgy and a bit more controversial, and I don't think that there were a lot of artists at the time that were even connecting their artwork to outside politics. The thing that brought Asco all together was the protest against the Vietnam War, the Moratorium. (An infamous 1970 protest against the war that saw 20,000-30,000 people marching through East Los Angeles. It ended with a police riot and three people dead, including noted journalist Ruben Salazar, who had a Sheriff's teargas canister go through his head while he took a break from the mayhem in a local bar.) Though you could say, "Well, you guys didn't produce anything that was anti-war in that respect," that was a powerful thing that happened locally that did bring us together as artists. It's an interesting way to come together, not only as visual artists, but I think it's also an interesting way to get musicians like Los Illegals together and say, "Okay, we're gonna represent the illegal aliens that they keep deporting. Let's write songs about that, and let's be a band about that and we'll just play our music really fast and we'll include keyboards so that it can sound somewhat sophisticated." That's why it seemed like, from Asco to Los Illegals, it was almost a parallel, because of what Asco was trying to do, and then when I formed Los Illegals in the late-'70s and made that transition, I still had the same consciousness and pretty much the same ideology that I had with Asco and formed Los Illegals.

Jimmy: Outside of the initial four of you, how many people were in Asco? Because it seems gray; Humberto Sandoval is mentioned in tandem with you four, I know artist Diane Gamboa was involved at some point, artist/writer Sean Carrillo was



The Brat

involved at some point, writer Marisela Norte I think was another one, and there are others. Were they Asco members, or kind of adjunct members, or...?

Willie: Well, I think that would be up to Gronk and Harry, because I left Asco in 1978. At that point, they brought in other artists, and then I became the one that made spot appearances with Asco in the '80s, when I had already formed Los Illegals. I was being invited, and every now and then, I would do performances with them.

Jimmy: Kind of like a "special guest."

Willie: Then I became the special guest. But the decade of the original Asco members was the decade of the '70s and Herb Sandoval wasn't always an active member in Asco, although he did some of the performances with us.

Jimmy: So do you think he's worthy of the inclusion, though?

Willie: I think deserving in the inclusion to a certain degree, but maybe not in terms of the final analysis of Asco if you were to take that decade, the decade that I was in Asco. If you took that decade and you took all the pieces that were produced from that decade—not the one that were produced when Diane and Sean and them... —you could take those pieces and analyze 'em a different way or the same way, but I'm talking about the period when I was actually an active member.

Jimmy: The initial thought.

Willie: Yeah, the initial thought of it, the origins, the beginning of it and how we formed; Herb was not part of that. He was a guest, pretty much, periodically all the way through. But going back to one of the important pieces that gets a lot of publicity that is also never mentioned, and it's also in Harry's book (*Urban Exile*, which is a collection of Harry Gamboa's work with Asco and as a solo artist), is the taping of Patssi Valdez. Herb was right next to her and Herb has never been in any publicity shot showing *The Instant Mural*. It just shows Gronk taping Patssi to the wall, but it never shows Herb next to Patssi being taped by Gronk and that gives it a whole different feel.

Jimmy: Yeah, because it can be interpreted as some kind of statement about the subjugation of women or anything like that, whereas if you had them both in there, it's a whole different thing as well.

Willie: Right.

Jimmy: So why did you leave the group?

Willie: I think my main inspiration to leave at that time was I was really puzzled by an exhibit that we called *Ascozilla* at Cal State L.A. The way I interpreted it was it just seemed old for me. I felt that it was going to be my last show with them because they were getting more into exhibiting letters, exhibiting dialogue with other people, and just exhibiting the letters. That's what that show consisted of: just letters and correspondence from other people, them having dialogue, the mail art.

Jimmy: Focusing on art more as a concept rather than art as an object.

Willie: Right. So that's where I felt that I was just getting too old, because I didn't agree with that perspective and I didn't agree with that concept. My band at the time played for the opening and then I pretty much announced that that was my last exhibit with Asco and I made it clear to the Asco members as well that this was gonna be my last exhibit with them and that I was gonna pursue my music more. And then six, seven months later, we formed Los Illegals.

Jimmy: There was no acrimony or anything like that?

Willie: No, it was all with respect.

Jimmy: One of your criticisms of Los Four that I read was that they were more university educated and they were taking this university education and funneling these... "tropes," I guess is the word, these images from the Chicano movement—the lowriders, the Virgen and all that—and they're kinda funneling them through, while you guys were more along the lines of, "We weren't educated. We're coming more from the street, from the heart." Given that, do you find any irony or humor in the fact that art scholars now spend so much energy dissecting and pigeonholing your work, the Asco work? Xiuy sent me this thing about Los Illegals with these fifty dollar fucking words and just trying to tear it to pieces and get to its essence. Do you find any irony in that?

Willie: Well, I just think that it's still going on and it's gonna go on for all of us, and who knows how long it's gonna go on? I'm not surprised, because they were doing it then.

Jimmy: Do you think it's funny at all?

Willie: Um, nah, I don't take it serious in the way that I would have then, for it to turn into something sad, or turn into something that I'm proud of, or something that I laugh at. It's just like, "Oh well, whatever." It still seems like, in an overall view or perspective of everything—and maybe this just comes because I feel like as I've gotten older, more and more things seem to not affect me emotionally—I have that perspective where it's just gonna go wherever it's gonna go and I don't want to spend a whole lot of energy to have to explain it. It was what it was, it represented a time, it represented us at the time that we were doing it, and people are still to this day—and that's the part that I'm somewhat surprised—people are making it out to be a big thing. And I think that a lot has to do with the fact that there's no one that's made that kind of an impact—whether it be negative or positive—that has followed our footsteps. I keep asking myself, "Where are the Ascos of today? Where are the Illegals of today?" I keep asking that question, so that's why we were thinking that maybe we need to make this academy (Vex AD), this "101" school and we need to let everybody know these are the elements that you should be working with rather than *these* elements.

Jimmy: Subversion 101.

Willie: Exactly.

Jimmy: A lot of the stuff that Asco was doing—the evolution of Asco, the glam influence, your challenging of the status quo, your emphasis on performance art—to me it seems a lot of that parallels what was going on in the initial Hollywood punk scene. Were you guys aware that stuff was going on, like the stuff at the Masque, and the whole Canterbury scene?

Willie: Yeah, we were aware of that stuff, but I think we were more influenced by filmmakers (Federico) Fellini and Alejandro (Jodorowsky). To me, the "punks" that I related to were the cholos driving by with fuckin' shotguns, not the people in Hollywood and shit like that, or dudes coming from Texas, screaming and being punk, and then all of a sudden they're Chicano and everybody thinks that they're from East L.A. and they write it. You know, shit like that, to me, was not real, you know?

Jimmy: You're talking about the Plugz.

Willie: Yeah. That kind of stuff kinda. It wasn't even like I was jealous of them. It had nothing to do with it. It's just that people jumped on that, ate it up, and, unfortunately, they didn't become famous by doing an original punk song in Spanish. They became famous by doing "La Bamba" in Spanish, and that's unfortunate that they rode on the coats of East L.A. Chicanos and faked everybody out. Los Lobos kinda did that in a way, too.

Xiuy: The sad thing is that the Chicano, Richie Valens, died. They didn't have any more shit to go on.

Willie: I think Illegals and Asco for me was Jodorowsky and Fellini, not the Sex Pistols, 'cause, to me, that stuff got interpreted. Film inspired me more than music.

Jimmy: So musically and intellectually, stuff like, say, "Anarchy in the U.K." didn't particularly speak to you.

Willie: No, it didn't, because I was still relating to the cholos and I was still relating to my brothers, and I was still relating to what was happening in Geraghty, what was happening in Big Hazard (Geraghty Loma and Big Hazard are two more local street gangs), and my brother getting stabbed and me still, you know, feeling the repercussions of *The Wall that Cracked Open*, when I painted that mural (his best known mural, painted in the alley where his brother was stabbed on the night it happened). All of that made me feel like I was more punk than the fuckin' Sex Pistols. So that stuck with me to the point that I didn't want to do anything. I mean, I would even ask the dudes from around here, from Hicks and those streets up there a-ways, "Where did you get that fuckin' British accent, man?" [Xiuy laughs] "You're from right there, fuckin' Pomeroy (Avenue), man. What's wrong with you?" They all thought they were dudes from Britain. They all had British accents and I was just like, "Shit."

Xiuy: With Indian faces.

Willie: And they were all Cuauhtémoc looking. [laughs]

Jimmy: In the '80s, one of the things I thought was funny was when the whole Nazi skinhead thing hit L.A., I remember going to shows and all of a sudden these morenitos, you know, with fuckin' Indian faces and thick-ass Chihuahua accents were saying they were Spanish so they could hang out with the Nazis. And it's like, "Dude, what the fuck are you doing?"

Willie: Yeah, I know it.

Jimmy: And yeah, it seems like a perpetuation

of that—instead of finding and drawing inspiration from those things and channeling them through their own experiences, they just wanted to ape what had already come before.

Willie: Right.

Jimmy: Yeah, so that's interesting. But what about punk as a subculture did you find that you could identify with?

Willie: I think the attitude more than anything. I think it just allowed the audience to accept more attitude and serious lyrics in music, because we were coming out of the era of Joan Baez, Joni Mitchell....

Xiuy: Santana-itis.

Willie: Santana-itis, but with a bit of the Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, where you're gonna sing a song about a very violent, very pissed-off attitude, but you're gonna sing it beautiful, like you're an angel, like you're dead already. So to me it just seemed like it was cool to fuckin' be pissed and to *scream* like you were fuckin' pissed off. The thing that we were relating to, more so, was the attitude, not so much the theme or the concept.

(Talk drifts to modern mainstream punk rock bands)

Jimmy: A common thread that's going on with a lot of older punks is a lot of them are just kinda sitting around saying to the newer bands, "You know, you guys sound like Crosby, Stills, and Nash with heavy guitars."

Xiuy: Or they photocopy each other. They all sound the same.

Jimmy: Right.

Xiuy: Shock value only works.... Okay, you graduate from GI Joe and army men to punk or shock value, Gwar and those kinds of bands, but you're supposed to develop after that and get your own thing. They either break up, they get girlfriends, or they're done.

Jimmy: Or they go heavy metal or something. Or they funnel back into the status quo.

Xiuy: Yeah.

Jimmy: My whole thing is that I want a band that I react to. I don't care if they piss me off, but the thing is that all these bands are pissing me off in all the wrong ways. They're boring me to shit.

Xiuy: There was this one band here that Willie found. They had—a lot of it was shit, but a couple of pieces were shiny. "What was that? That was good." And then we meet them and they already have that attitude, like, "We're gonna make it." The dude's already, "Well, shit, we got the hit. We got all that going on." So I say, "Dude, you're wearing a fuckin' Guns 'n' Roses T-shirt."

Jimmy: [laughs] Yeah, that's not a good way to start.

Xiuy: And he's like "Gee, I never thought about that.... " "What are you gonna do that makes you world-class?" We want world-class bands, *world-class* bands from East L.A.—Chicano bands, punk bands. They may have to sell a little bit short, but the Beatles cut their hair to get famous.

Willie: We (Los Illegals) had that something that got us in there.

Xiuy: Everybody booed the shit out of us! [laughs]

Willie: There were a lot of other bands that I thought should've gotten a break, too, but we got a break, I think, because there were certain things that we were doing right—not so much in the eyes of the community, but in the eyes of the record company, we were doing something that they dug.

Xiuy: How about this? (Shows the Sex Pistols letter to the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame) Is that beautiful or what?

Jimmy: Oh yeah, this is fuckin' hilarious.

Xiuy: Willie's an anti-Sex Pistols person, I'm pro-Sex Pistols, but you take pieces of those things together. I learn a lot from him. He learns a lot from me, and it's worked out great. Asco had the same idea as that, rebelling against everything. I liked that, but I also liked the Pistols.

Jimmy: So with regards to you, what was it about punk that you found related to you?

Xiuy: They were the unwelcomed, unloved reality. *We* were the unwelcomed, unloved reality. It made a lot of sense. Like the copy of *Regeneración* I found on the bus in high school, it

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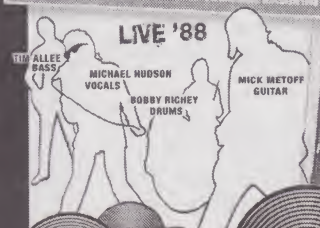

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was like a person I wanted to know. "Who are these fuckin' people? I've got to know them. I've got to know these fuckers 'cause they're just like me." And there were thousands like us, guys and girls just waiting to do something and not be pressured by the cultures, and I'm talking about America *and* Mexico.

Mexico is one of the most oppressive cultures you've ever had. You've got to speak their fuckin' language when they come here; you're never as good as them. It's bullshit. And they hated us when we went over there and told them that. We had to sit down and school ourselves on what to do when we went on tours over there. Thank god we did, because it would've been like, "*Fuck....* " They would not let us speak Spanish because they hated our accents, and they hated any Spanglish 'cause they didn't understand. They would actually tell us, "We want you to do it in English." Apparently, that's the language of rock'n'roll. It's an oppressive country. These kids that are in the MEChAs (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanos de Aztlán, a student organization that promotes Chicano pride, unity, and empowerment through education) today, they have no fuckin' clue. They should go over there, live there and get their asses fucked up, and say, "Fuck that, let's be Chicanos." We had a good time in Mexico. We went on tour with El Tri (Mexico's answer to the Rolling Stones).

Jimmy: Wow, I can imagine the kinda shit you had to endure.

Xiuy: Bullrings with 10,000 people. It was a huge fight. And the word went out from the press 'cause my friend from Asco here, [laughs] my best friend, he would come in there and say, "They want us to suck their dicks." They asked us, "What do you think of El Tri?" We grew up in the land of rock'n'roll. Mississippi players would come to L.A., you know? We did stuff with Stevie Ray Vaughn. Blues is in our blood, in Chicano blood here. It's different over there. They don't play it right. They've got soul, they've got the salsa, they've got their ethnicity going, but they don't have blues there. And we have blues because we're a bicultural situation here.

Jimmy: They got blues from the Rolling Stones.

Xiuy: And it's not really good. So when you go see El Tri, it's like....

Willie: It's like all the bands we used to make fun of, singing "Johnny B. Goode." [laughs]

Xiuy: Yeah, really bad.

Willie: "Oh, shit, do they have to do a fuckin' blues song?"

Xiuy: Right, and then they'd stick a mic in front of my pal here and say, "Tell us about how you love El Tri," and he goes...

Willie: "Who?" [laughs] I said, "No, you mean 'ZZ-Tri.'"

Xiuy: Oh, they made us pay for that one, big time. So it was a lot of fights. It would be like, "What did you guys, you Chicanos, ever have that we didn't already give you as a culture?" How insulting is that? And our answer was, "Your claim to fame in the United States—the crispy taco, the burrito—all that shit that they love when they eat something nice and warm and think Mexicans are okay—it's from us. And when your asses are in trouble, the first lines of defense on the marches are Chicanos. Where are the Mexicanos? You're selling elotes (buttered corn cobs on sticks) on the side." Didn't go over well. Oh, man, they were waiting for us.

Willie: When we played "El Lay," right away, the first thing they started screaming while we're singing the song is "mojados."

Xiuy: They called us "wetbacks."

Willie: The Mexicanos in Mexico called us wetbacks.

Xiuy: "Wetbacks, who are traitors to the country, who left to become mojados. Fuck you wetbacks." So wetbacks in Los Angeles and San Francisco and for the whites...

Jimmy: It was a whole different connotation.

Xiuy: And we love this shit. If we don't have this kind of shit happening, we're bored.

Willie: That's what makes it exciting. It's like you were saying, when you hear the bands and they piss you off the wrong way, it was like we were pissing people off, but we felt we were pissing them off in a very conscious way that made them think about what it was they were doing, not just because they hated us. We were waking them up.

Xiuy: They had to reeducate themselves. This whole thing that I got from Asco was that they were anti- all that Aztec shit, all that bullshit. It was more Chicano-oriented, it was correct, and we thought we would do the same thing with music. We would keep those elements because we couldn't deny who we were no matter what and put it together to do it that way, and that's what we did. We mixed it all up. Bands now, they....

You watch *Walkout* (a film recounting the true story of the "blowouts," when students walked out of East L.A.'s high schools in protest of the Vietnam War) and it had nothing to do with Mexicanismo. It had everything to do with Chicanismo. They played one "Land of 1000 Dances" [a hit song by '60s Chicano garage rockers Cannibal & the Headhunters] and at the end of the show some chick is singing in Nahuatl. Fuck that! We didn't know shit about Nahuatl, with the fuckin' pre-Columbian flute on the DX-7. [Willie laughs] What the fuck was that? That was not Chicano. That's not The Walkouts. So you see where we're at. We're, like, hardcore in that area. But at the same time, when it comes to defending their asses, we're the first ones out there, and we're the first ones getting shit right now.

Jimmy: It's like a family thing, the way I look at it. In the punk scene in East L.A., I hated certain bands. I didn't get along with them personally, I didn't like their friends, didn't like their fuckin' music, but I was always the first one to champion them, to say, "These guys are from the neighborhoods. These guys are fuckin' great," because it's like a familial thing. Outside the family, nobody says anything, and I think it's the same with Mexicanismo.

Xiuy: We did an interview a couple of months ago, a national PBS kinda thing (at one of Willie's art shows) and they should've never interviewed us to begin with. And it was art people. First, they started off with his art show and that was a cool thing. They thought they were going to get, you know, "This guy pays tribute to Mexico." But Willie made the mistake, and it was a good mistake, of having us do some live music, some reinterpretations of some American songs, and they invited me and the other guys to the interview. They got the rhetoric about Mexico and they were shocked—I could see it on the guy's face—that we said Mexico was an oppressive country to us culturally. And they go, "Well, why do you guys have Los Illegals?" "Well, it's fuckin' bilingual, dummy. You know? Los. Illegals. It's who we are."

Jimmy: And it can be interpreted as a statement against this country as well, because everybody... Like my wife is Nicaraguan, but as far as the greater Caucasian culture is concerned, she's a Mexican.

Xiuy: That's true.

Jimmy: Anybody that has brown skin and an Indian face, even Indians are Mexicans in this country.

Willie: Yeah, the person, what're they gonna do when they're pissed off at something? They're gonna just say, "Go back where you came from."

Jimmy: Right. "Lynwood?"

Willie: [laughs] "You can go back to L.A. County?"

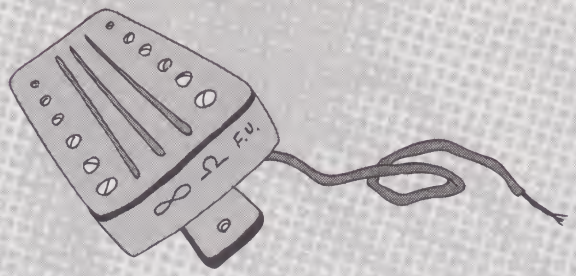
Xiuy: Taking these points and not being afraid to be different is what makes a person, band, group, art group, whatever, go ahead. The problem with these young kids is they're not ready to step out. Yeah, you can throw middle fingers in backyard parties to everybody all night, but that's not going to take you to the Westside. What do you do that makes you world-class? That's what we wanna get them to do. And you know, the sorry state of music today is that they have to craft songs that are listenable. It's not like the old days anymore, buddy. It's over. There's no money because everybody's downloading shit and pop bands rule everything.

Willie: And the record companies have to compete with the internet.

Jimmy: Your perception of Chicanismo is interesting, because the prevailing mentality, or the attitude toward Chicanismo is—like you said, you have Scots-Irish blood, and so on and so forth—if you're not full-blooded Mexican, you can't possibly be Chicano.

Xiuy: Should I be ashamed of this [Shows a magazine article about a town in Italy]? This is what my family is named after. Velo, this little town over there, and they have Festivál over there. Why should I be ashamed of that? 'Cause some fucker named Garcia tells me, "You're not Chicano with that name"? Fuck that shit! And it takes us, or it takes people like us, to have the balls to say, "Fuck you." If you're going to say "fuck you" to society in general and the status quo, you've got to say "fuck you" to yourself and the people around you. I learned that from him, and Asco.

Los Illegals can be contacted at losillegals@hotmail.com.



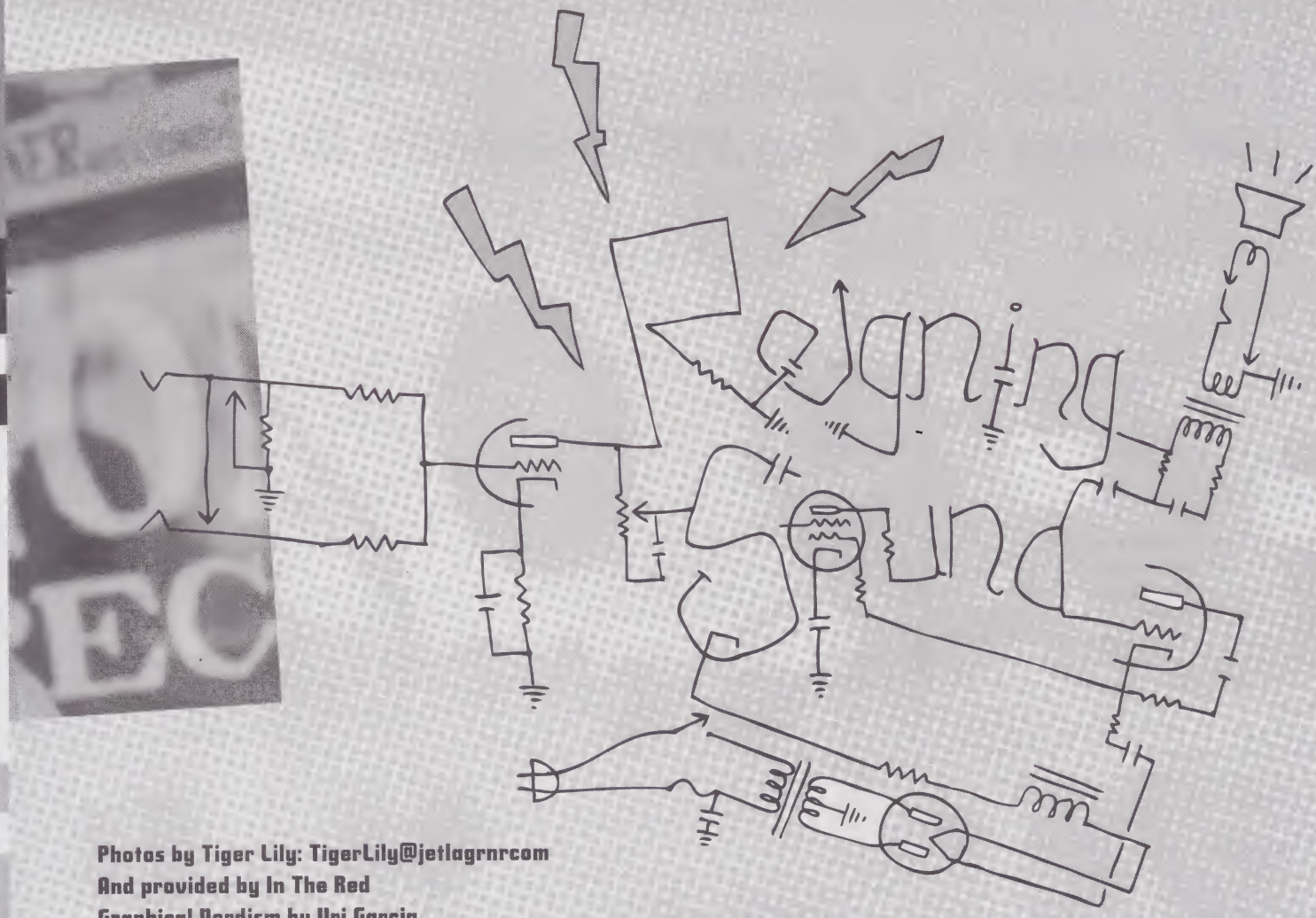
Greg Cartwright is a legend of the garage rock underground. His band, the Reigning Sound, is lauded by both small and big magazines—receiving pages of press in the former and the occasional blurb and name drop in the latter. But it's word of mouth that keeps Cartwright's cult growing—your friend's conviction that he's just heard the greatest songwriter since Gene Clark being of far greater importance to you than any glowing record review. Cartwright is about as unassuming as they come and rather ambivalent to any mainstream recognition he's received. As Greg told one interviewer: "(My ultimate goal is to leave) a couple of good records to find at a garage sale." Over the course of Greg's nearly twenty-year recording career, that goal's been achieved many times over.

Cartwright began playing guitar in his teens, eventually teaming up with lifelong friend Jack Yarber in the Pain Killers and the Compulsive Gamblers. The Gamblers found themselves at the wrong place at the wrong time—the "halcyan" days of grunge had no use for Memphians playing their city's music (Stax, Alex Chilton, Sun Records, etc.). So Greg and Jack teamed up with Eric Friedl and formed the Oblivians in 1993; the band's namesake becoming each member's surname (i.e. Greg Oblivian). The Oblivians sounded like hell's house band. But underneath the Oblivian's *White Light/White Heat* amplifiers were some really sweet songs in the vein of early rock'n'roll songwriters like Leiber and Stoller and Carole King: "Bad Man" could've appeared on the Byrds' *Mr. Tambourine Man* or as the flipside to Frankie Lymon And The Teenager's "Goody, Goody" 45. By the time the Oblivians disbanded in 1998, two things were apparent: 1.) a precipitous increase of two-guitar, no-bass groups was on the horizon; and 2.) Greg Cartwright had a real gift for songwriting.

In 1998 the Compulsive Gamblers reformed. In 2000, they released one of the greatest records I've ever heard, *Crystal Gazing/Luck Amazing*. Loud, urgent, sweet, pissed-off—the record is a rollercoaster ride showcasing Greg's amazing, timeless Americana songwriting. (Respect is also due to Jack Yarber's three stellar contributions.) The general consensus is that "Stop and Think It Over" is the gem of the album (Mary Weiss and the Hives covering the song doesn't hurt). But I'm convinced that "Two Thieves" is a country rock number in the same league as Gene Clark's solo work; it's a personal ballad reminiscing two lost souls—like that chapter in Thomas Wolfe's autobiographical *Look Homeward Angel* where Wolfe's wayward brother dies.

The Reigning Sound (formed in 2001) is Greg's current project. The band is four albums deep and not a hiccup exists in its catalogue. Unlike the Oblivians and the Compulsive Gamblers, the Reigning Sound (with Cartwright as figurehead and sole constant) is a direct vehicle for Greg's songwriting—with stellar contributions along the way by musicians like bass virtuosa Jeremy Scott and keyboardist Alex Greene. Seeing as Greg is one of the greatest living songwriters active today, I'd recommend (for the Cartwright benighted) his Reining Sound records as a starting point; the Compulsive Gamblers's *Crystal Gazing/Luck Amazing* should also be with you at record store checkout time.

Cartwright has never disappointed me. Greg's choice of side projects (Deadly Snakes, Mary Weiss, etc.) is impeccable; the covers on his albums (Sam and Dave, Nolan Strong, Little Eva, etc.) are always appropriate; and his records are nearly filler-free: Only Gene Clark and Jeffrey Lee Pierce can boast a similar track record. And the voice—Greg easily oscillates between deranged blue-eyed soul and melodic teen ballads like only a handful can (Mitch Ryder quickly comes to mind). But it's the lyrics that get me every time. Greg Cartwright's songwriting progresses with the years. He's an enormously talented individual. The fact that Greg keeps putting out records makes this world a more tolerable place... if only for the length of an LP.



Photos by Tiger Lily: TigerLily@jetlagrnrcom
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Graphical Nerdism by Uri Garcia

Interview by Ryan Leach

(Special thanks to Mor Fleisher for help with the transcription.)

Ryan: Did you come from a musical family? Did your mom or dad play an instrument?
Greg: No. As far as I know, there was no one in the immediate family who played an instrument. I know that on my dad's side, he and his siblings were given instruments for Christmas one year, and that's where I got my first instruments—from my grandmother's attic. They were put in storage up there. When my grandmother saw that I had an interest in music, she said I was welcome to have them. So I kind of went through them one by one. I actually started with the drums. And then I got the guitars down later. With the exception of a piano, my grandmother pretty much had every single instrument. There was a bass, a guitar, a set of drums, and some amps.
Ryan: For all intents and purposes, your first band was the Painkillers, just before you formed the Compulsive Gamblers, correct?
Greg: Yes. That was the first band that Jack (Yarber) and I had.
Ryan: What music were you listening to when you formed the Painkillers?
Greg: Let me think. I was only eighteen or nineteen then. I was into a lot of older stuff from the '60s, but I was trying to get into what was contemporary at that time—the indie stuff.
Ryan: I don't want to put Larry (Hardy, owner of In the Red Records) on the spot, but he said that two of your favorite bands were the Pixies and the Misfits.
Greg: Oh yeah. Absolutely. At that time I was still probably influenced by the Misfits, too.
Ryan: That makes a lot of sense. At first, I was taken aback when Larry told me that. But then considering what you'd do with the Oblivians later, the pieces kind of came together for me.
Greg: [laughs] Yes.
Ryan: Moving on to the Compulsive Gamblers, which would place us at the dawn of the 1990s, I read somewhere that you had a concept for that band; that the group would literally live up to its name: hard luck songs about bad days in Atlantic City and Las Vegas.
Greg: That was definitely the concept for one of our songs; a tune Jack wrote called "Quit This Town." So I was probably focusing in on that song in the interview you read.
Ryan: A couple of years after the Compulsive Gamblers had started, you formed the equally well-named Oblivians. And there was an overlap there between the two groups? Did you find people more receptive to the Oblivians?
Greg: With the Oblivians versus the Gamblers: The Oblivians was the first group that I was in where the band received something more than regional attention. With the Gamblers, we had played long enough to get gigs out of town, but only in a three or four state radius. [laughs] So there was definitely more attention paid to the Oblivians.

I think, stylistically, there was a real difference, too. The Compulsive Gamblers had more of a Faces, bar band-type feel. And we were into that at the time. We were also drinking a lot, and you can kind of hear

I just want to make my records and hope that the right people like them. That's pretty much it.

that, too. You know the saying, "You are what you eat?" [laughs]

I remember when we (the Compulsive Gamblers) put out our first seven inch. One of the only magazines that reviewed it was *Flipside*. They said, "The A side is only funny once…it's a Bar-Kays rip-off." The guy kind of hit upon what we were trying to do. He just didn't seem to like it. And I don't know if that was because there were other people doing it elsewhere or that the time had not come for people to like what we were doing. But because the Gamblers were more of an accessible bar band it might have made people think, "This is just one of the one million groups that sounds like this." Whereas the Oblivians were so much more stripped down. Even though it was more amateurish, it was different. I think that that gave us more room for response from the critics.

Ryan: The Oblivians make the Chocolate Watchband sound like Pat Boone. Those Oblivians records are about as raw as you can get. I can imagine—it's like an Electric Eels situation where you either love the record or hate it. But I guarantee the Oblivians, like the Electric Eels, are going to get your attention.

Greg: Yeah, absolutely. I love that Electric Eels stuff. So many good things came out of Cleveland.

Ryan: Ah, man, Rocket From The Tombs! That group was amazing.

Greg: I know.

Ryan: Have you heard that Peter Laughner collection, *Take the Guitar Player for a Ride*?

Greg: That's a good record. I was so glad when all of that Rocket from the Tombs stuff got a legitimate release. There was that other thing that that same label did…

Ryan: Smog Veil?

Greg: Yeah. It was that three ten-inch record thing that had the Electric Eels and the Styrenes on it.

Ryan: I actually got to interview David Thomas about a year and a half ago. He was fairly receptive to answering my questions about Peter Laughner. I was pleased because I really like Peter's songwriting and guitar playing.

Greg: That's really awesome. On some of the Rocket From The Tombs recordings—it's so dense. You can still hear some of the individual guitar playing and it's pretty clear right away which one is Peter's.

Ryan: It's amazing, too, if you put that band into its proper context of 1973 and 1974. It's like, "Wow. You guys must have been really popular."

Greg: [laughs] Especially when you think of all that really bad heavy rock that was going on at that time—around 1971 and 1972—terrible music was just starting to get a real footing with radio. It's amazing that all of this really great stuff was happening too, like Rocket From The Tombs and the Electric Eels. I don't know if you've ever picked up that Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers' *Live at the Long Branch* album.

Ryan: No. I don't have that one.

Greg: It's live stuff from '71 and '72 and, man, the Modern Lovers were brutal. It's so good. John Felice from the Real Kids was still in the band. The sound quality is a lot better than what you'd expect from a live record. Again, with a lot of that stuff, it's hard to believe that such good music could be going on simultaneously with all this terrible stuff that had caught the public's attention. It's just like today, I guess. It just boils down to what a label wants to push and throw money at.

Ryan: And I think you can make that comparison to the Oblivians in 1993. Today, it's almost applauded to do a two guitar, no bass thing. I mean there was something of a precedent for what you guys were doing. But what was popular in 1993? Alice In Chains.

Greg: It was strictly out of necessity. Eric was more hip to Pussy Galore and that kind of stuff. I was more into older music. So the stuff that was going in the '80s, I missed a lot of that.

Ryan: That's probably a good thing.

Greg: Yeah. But there were some good things that I latched onto, like the Pixies. However, I was too busy trying to figure out what I wanted to do. And my head was at least halfway stuck in the past, so I didn't really know what was going on with modern bands; groups that had come just a few years before. So when the Oblivians had started Eric had just started learning guitar…

Ryan: Oh shit! How old was he? In his mid-twenties?

Greg: No. Eric's older than anyone else in the band. At the time of the Oblivians, he was somewhere around twenty-eight or thirty.

Ryan: Yes! One thing I always liked about the Oblivians—and when you were drumming for '68 Comeback—was the fact that you seemed much more conceptual. I mean virtuosity was not much of a factor.

Greg: I think if you have the right people and the right energy between those people… virtuosity is almost useless to me. That's for people who want one person to shine… a nice solo. It's just as effective to have somebody in your band who plays from the gut; it's more intense. After a while, people who are really good musicians—they just start sounding academic. It's kind of the problem with a lot of the modern alt country music. The people in those bands—they're into roots music—but they're too good. They're so into it that the music sounds mundane. They are trying to sound simple and their musicianship is just of too high of caliber; they're playing so far below their level. They're kind of missing the point. The music they're trying to play isn't going to sound like they want it to.

Ryan: And I think that's a really good point. Not to knock people who've really excelled in academics or are really good musicians, but I think some songwriters have missed the story of Carl Perkins writing "Blue Suede Shoes." When he came up with the lyrics, he spelled *suede* phonetically: "S-W-A-D-E." Let's just say that when Carl was learning how to play guitar, he skipped the Mel Bay book and went straight for the Hank Williams record.

Greg: [laughs] Absolutely. Carl was one of the greatest. He could write them. He could play them. He could sing them. His guitar playing was awesome. The *Carl Perkins* record on Sun is probably the best Sun album.

Ryan: Damn! That's a bold statement, Greg, and I'm glad you're making it!

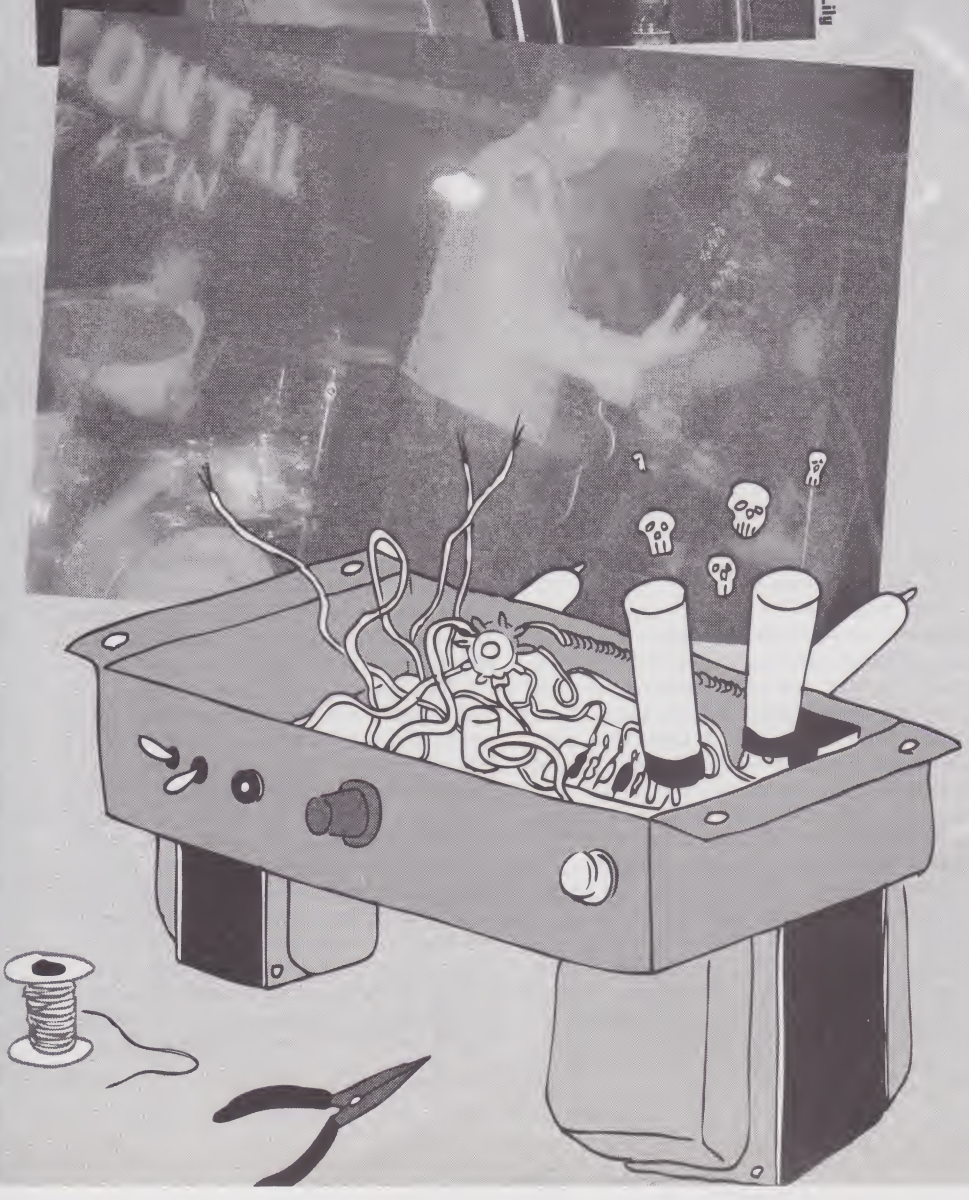
Greg: It's true though. Jerry Lee's first record is pretty good—*High School Confidential*. That's tough to beat, but there's some filler and a lot of covers on that one. Johnny Cash's are good. But his Sun stuff doesn't have a lot of variation. They're all awesome songs, but Cash's records don't give you the rollercoaster ride. However, on the Carl Perkins' album, every song is a killer. Each song has a great guitar lead; he writes great lyrics—"Dixie Fried"…

Ryan: "Dixie Fried" is an amazing song.

Greg: Yeah and "Tennessee" and "Movie Magg." Every song makes you go, "Wow! He can't top that." And then, "Boom! Here comes another one." All of his stuff is so fantastic.

Ryan: [laughs] Very true. I remember Johnny Cash said something along the lines of, "Carl Perkins was probably the greatest

photos: Tiger Lily



guitar player I ever heard. Why do you think I had his brother in my band?"

Greg: [laughs] Well, Carl played guitar for him.

Ryan: Yeah, in about '67 or so when he was kind of down and out.

Greg: Yes. It was kind of an act of pity. But it was a really good thing for Cash to do because Carl needed a helping hand. And even in the late '60s, after Carl had stuck his hand in the fan, his guitar playing was still pretty damn good.

Ryan: Jumping back to the Oblivians, "Bad Man" has become something of a right of passage for anyone interested in garage rock/punk today—a Chuck Berry-type situation for the underground.

Greg: Really? You think so?

Ryan: Yeah. I mean it's all in the eye of the beholder, but I think you've really left an indelible mark on a lot of people under thirty-five. At least to the people I know. The Detroit Cobras cover it. And whenever I DJ, it's obligatory that I play "Bad Man." the reaction I get is always the same; it's almost a sense of camaraderie. And with the exception of the Oblivians' cover of Little Eva's "Locomotion"—which is one of the greatest things I've ever heard—"Bad Man" marks the highpoint of that group. Do you remember writing that song?

Greg: I do. I wrote that song right around the time the Oblivians formed. My son had just gotten this little toy xylophone and I wrote "Bad Man" on it. I just came up with the melody for it because this xylophone only had about six keys on it. And you had to hit it with this little plastic mallet. [laughs] But I was sitting with him on the floor and we were playing with his toys; I was banging away on it. I played it a couple of times so it would stick in my head and then I put it down on a 4-track recorder the next day with just the xylophone. I figured out what the chords would be; I then wrote the lyrics to it.

Later I recorded a version where I laid down the guitar first, the xylophone second, and lastly the vocals. And that version didn't come out until after the Oblivians version; it came out on the Greg Oblivian and the Tip-Tops record, which was just some demos and things I recorded with my wife. It came out on Sympathy Records. But I had been kicking around "Bad Man" for probably a year or two before I recorded it with the Oblivians. And it was one of those songs where I thought, "I don't know if this is really a good song for the Oblivians. Maybe this would have been a good track for the Gamblers or some other band." So I kind of kept it on the backburner, but when we needed a song, I pulled it out and it ended up working really well. It's just one of those things where you have to adjust a song for a band. You have to change the dynamic to fit the people who are playing it. The two versions are really different. The Tip-Tops version is kind of melancholy, whereas the Oblivians take is sort of tough-sounding.

Ryan: As I said, I really love that song. And kind of going off of what you were

I'm going to be the Thomas Kinkade of music.

just talking about—on adjusting a song to fit a group—I think the reason why I like the Oblivians's version of "Bad Man" so much is that you have this juxtaposition of really abrasive music with these really sweet lyrics. That's also why I love the Oblivians version of Little Eva's "Locomotion." One song ("Locomotion") came out of the Brill Building. The other one ("Bad Man") could've.

Greg: Yeah. When I formed the Oblivians, I was really into doo-wop. I was listening to that a lot. I started collecting those records and some early blues stuff. And the chord progression for "Bad Man" is a classic doo-wop chord progression. I didn't do it intentionally, but if you listen to it, it's the same as "Village of Love" and a million other songs that have that same sound. But it worked out really well. Although it's derivative of a lot of things I love and listen to, it has its own thing. It's cool too. The Little Eva thing—Jack sings that one.

Ryan: Yeah, I know he does.

Greg: But what's funny about that one is that when Jack brought it to a rehearsal, I said, "Oh, yeah, the Little Eva song. I know the drum beat to that one." And Jack said: "Yeah, but I want to do it more like Grand Funk Railroad." Grand Funk had done a version of it that was a hit in the '70s. So his version is based more on the Grand Funk take on it.

Ryan: Wow. I had no idea. I thought you guys would've been like, "Yeah let's give this the Oblivians treatment."

Greg: And at the end of the day, it's kind of a mesh. Because in my head I'm hearing Little Eva. In Jack's head, he's hearing Grand Funk. And no matter what we're thinking, Eric is going to play it like Eric. And it is going to sound like us—not like Little Eva or Grand Funk. I think the song worked out really well. "Locomotion" is an awesome song. There was just a Little Eva reissue. I forget the label that did it. But that *Locomotion* album—that's such a good record.

Ryan: Oh! The one with her riding the fucking train on the cover?

Greg: Yeah.

Ryan: I have a Shell Gasoline-released 12-inch EP that came out in like 1981 with the "Locomotion" and an extended version of the song on the flipside with the same album cover. Man, I'm such a Little Eva fan. One time Amoeba was selling an original pressing of the *Locomotion* for seventy-five bucks. I was so fucking broke at the time. But I remember calling my dad to ask if I could borrow some money. I love her!

Greg: [laughs] That's great. The story behind Little Eva is amazing.

Ryan: About her being Carole King's babysitter. That's crazy—you're taking care of some lady's kids, singing, and all of a sudden you've got a record contract.... Getting back to the Oblivians, you guys were constantly switching instruments: Greg Oblivian: drums, guitar, vocals; Jack Oblivian: drums, guitar, vocals. People think in really orthodox terms, and that's just another thing that was interesting and different about you guys. How did that come about?

Greg: It was really a product of necessity. While Jack and I were doing the Gamblers, I went on a two-month tour with '68 Comeback; I played drums. And that was really me getting reacquainted with the drums. I hadn't played them since I was a teenager. And drumming with '68 Comeback was a totally different style of drumming. I played standing up; I had just a floor tom with a tambourine on it, a snare, and one cymbal. Nothing else. I did that for two months, and when I came back from that tour I had kind of gotten it down.

Jack played a little bit of drums. He was actually a better drummer than me in terms of playing a whole kit. I kind of had gotten used to the two-drum thing, but it took me a while to get used to the whole drum kit. When I had gotten back from the '68 Comeback tour, Jack, Eric, and I had started playing together. We all had material, so when it became time for Jack to do one of his songs, I just switched to the drum kit so he could sing. We weren't really thinking in terms of a band, it was more of us just getting together to play. It was totally out of necessity; just twisting things around so we could get it to work.

After a couple of months, it got to a point where it was almost a finished product. Even though we had talked about getting a bass player, it was to a point where the Oblivians were a done thing. We just thought: "Why should we bother?" And so we just started doing it that way. Every once in a while, we threw in a song where Eric would play drums. But he didn't play drums, per se. Once in a while in the safety of a recording studio or rehearsal room, he'd get on the kit. But it was really rare to get Eric to play drums on the stage. I can probably count the times on one hand. Eric was really good at singing and playing guitar, so it was right for him to stick to that.

Ryan: What spawned the Compulsive Gamblers getting back together in the late '90s?

Greg: When the Oblivians stopped, Jack put out the Tip-Tops record.... Both of us were kicking around town and Rod Thomas, who had been our drummer in the early days of the Gamblers, was around. Jack was actually living with him; they were sharing a house. And it kind of fell back together. None of us were doing anything. We thought we'd do a record and some shows. It lasted a little while and then kind of imploded on one tour. It was one automotive problem after another. We had just bought this used van that looked great, but was really a piece of junk.

Ryan: *Crystal Gazing/Luck Amazing* has an unbelievable sound. Jim Diamond's production is stellar. How in the hell did you guys get that record to sound so powerful?

Greg: The key to that album sounding the way it does—like most records—the less you think about it, more than likely, the better the record and the recording is going to be. That album had almost zero time spent on it. The way it came out was we were doing this tour. And Larry Hardy called. He said, "I'm doing another record with Andre Williams. I've got different bands backing him on different tracks. I'd like the Gamblers to do a song or two with him. Would you do it?" And we said, "Yeah, sure. No problem." And we asked Larry when he'd like to do it. We were about to go on tour—it was the one that kind of ended up stopping the Gamblers—so we had to really plan it out to fit the schedule. He said, "If you'd like to do it (the Andre Williams tracks) before the tour, you can do the recordings in Detroit and start the tour from there." We decided that would be a good thing to do. So we went up there. I talked with Larry and he asked what we'd like to be paid for doing this.

And I told him, "Well, you don't have to pay us a lot of money to do this. What is your deal with Jim Diamond?"

Larry said, "I've got the studio locked up for a month, because all Jim's working on is this Andre album."

I said, "Well, give us two days of your time that you've already paid for. Let us use the studio for those days and we'll be straight."

Larry said, "Well, okay. That's a great deal."

So we did our thing with Andre. It took about a day. The following day we recorded our album. We just did song after song after song. We did that in one evening. Did some overdubs that night. The next day we did some more overdubs and mixed everything and that was that. Jim Diamond did a great job. The reason it sounds the way it does: it wasn't fucked with a lot. There aren't many overdubs. For the most part, what you see is what you get. It sounds really live. And it really is a live record in a lot of ways.

Ryan: Definitely. I was only sixteen when that record came out, so I didn't see you guys play. But *Crystal Gazing* stands as a testament to how formidable your sound must have been at that time. That record sounds like dynamite in your fucking speakers.

Greg: That's a really good record. I'm proud of that one. And that's a record that, as time goes by, people give it more attention. When it came out, it was sort of a nonplus. But like most of my catalogue—these things are not million sellers. They're going to have their small, niche audience. And over time people *will* latch onto them. Another generation will find it. And I'm totally fine with that. I'm not one of these people who complain about eating the crumbs off of Jack White's table. Billy Childish does that bullshit. Either you're happy making art or you're not. And I'm not knocking Billy: he has made some fine art. But I can't understand being bitter at other people because they're rock stars. I don't want to be a rock star. I just want to make my records and hope that the right people like them. That's pretty much it.

Ryan: Billy's kind of perplexing. He takes a Situationist approach in his opposition to working a traditional job so that he can focus on his art. And that's laudable. But to complain about other people ripping you off—people who have gone down roads you've negated—makes no sense. Eventually people are going to rip you off, especially if they don't share your ethos.

Greg: I know. He's kind of a poor man's elitist. [laughs] He seems to have a high concept of art—and I'm right on with that—but I don't understand why the Hives and the White Stripes have to be an issue with him. I just read some article and he was going on about that. On Billy's new record—which I think is really good—the only track I don't like is this one where he complains about being second tier to all these other bands: "I've been doing this for thirty years." Like you said, he's perplexing.

Ryan: I think you have a very healthy mindset in that sense. With all the stuff you have in the can, you could have a massive chip on your shoulder. Even adding to that is the fact that your songwriting is a case of right place, wrong time. Just listening to *Crystal Gazing/Luck Amazing*—"Stop and Think It Over" is a song the *Shangri-Las* could've recorded in '65. Or "Two Thieves" could've fit on a Gene Clark record. Speaking of "Two Thieves" that's one of the best things you've ever written. "Stop and Think It Over" is looked at as the gem of that record, but I'm really partial to "Two Thieves."

Greg: Thank you, man. I really appreciate that. "Two Thieves" is one I'm really proud of. It was a real personal song. And, at the same time, I felt really happy when I completed it. I was able to say everything I wanted to say on that song and it put a sort of cap on that part of my life. The song is about two friends of mine who were both drug addicts and passed away. It was an accomplishment for me—whether anybody liked it or not was irrelevant. I just thought, "This is maybe one of the best things I've ever written."

Ryan: I definitely agree with you. You're living in Asheville, North Carolina right now. Coincidentally, that's where Thomas Wolfe was born. He's my favorite American writer of the modern era. And Wolfe's major accomplishment was his influential brand of autobiographical fiction. He said that he couldn't imagine writing about something that didn't happen to him. Do you find yourself the same way?

Greg: Unfortunately, I do.

Ryan: That must get you into trouble sometimes. [laughs]

Greg: You find yourself in some hot water! I do try to be abstract sometimes. And that's because I just find it easier to be that way sometimes. Other songs come out more like poetry—and it's very personal. Only no one would ever know. Other things have to be more to the point in order for me to express myself. Sometimes, you have to use your craft to relieve yourself of things that have been on your mind.

Ryan: Wolfe had to do that. And that's why, after publishing *Look Homeward, Angel*, he had to leave North Carolina for a while.

Greg: Yeah. And, sadly, some people are born to write about what they know. And others are born to write about other things—total fiction.

Ryan: Science fiction kind of stuff.

Greg: Yeah, they can just dream that stuff up.

Ryan: Moving on to the Reigning Sound, the first single you did has a cover of Gene Clark's "Here Without You." With the exception of Lou Reed, Gene's probably my favorite songwriter.

Greg: Yeah, he's one of my favorites too.

Ryan: Definitely. I don't know about you, but when I really got into his back catalogue, his stuff hit me like a ton of bricks.

Greg: Yeah, same here. I had been into the Byrds' albums since I was a kid. I had their LPs and singles. And I grew up with a pretty good record collection because my dad was a record collector. We had pretty much everything as far as any type of rock or folk rock was concerned. So I was really aware of that stuff. But my dad didn't have any of the Gene Clark albums.

Ryan: I don't think anyone did, Greg.

Greg: [laughs] Well, I mean, some people did!

Ryan: Yeah, I was only joking.

Greg: He did have the Flying Burrito Brothers' stuff, but he didn't have the *Gosdin Brothers* record or Dillard & Clark.

Ryan: How good is that first Dillard & Clark record?

Greg: It's pretty fantastic. You know, a lot of people write off the second one, but it's about half good. [laughs] There are a lot of useless covers—anybody doing "Rocky Top" is just wasting wax. But had that second album been paired down to an EP, it would be *completely* brilliant. The throwaway bluegrass on there definitely hurts it, though.

Ryan: Switching back to the Reigning Sound, what kind of initial reactions did you receive with the release of *Time Bomb High School*? It might have taken a couple of people by surprise. You said once that you're really into people who write songs with melody, and I really found your penchant for melody coming through on *Time Bomb High School*. You have a very niche audience; did you feel people were cooling on you for releasing a more mid-tempo album that had a greater emphasis on lyrics?

Greg: I think people were. What's funny is that when you make records, there are people who will buy the records and listen to them because something inside the song really speaks to them. There are other people who will buy the same record and enjoy it, but it's only because it fits into a genre that they're into. They don't really listen to the songs, and that's okay. The world is full of music that's disposable whether rightly so or not. I find that what happens is that when the Oblivians wanted to make Oblivians records, there were people who liked it for both reasons. And when I put out the first Reigning Sound album, *Breakup Breakdown* on Sympathy For The Record Industry, which was super low-key, some people who loved the Oblivians saw the same qualities in *Breakup Breakdown*. Even though the genre was different, they loved it just as much. Others, who only liked the genre, hated *Breakup Breakdown* because it was not a genre that had been okay'd. So I kind of shed a layer of fans with that album. But then I picked up another layer of fans who didn't like the Oblivians because they were too abrasive. However they liked what they heard in the Reigning Sound songs, which were a little more accessible. So, as I'm losing people, I'm gaining others. It's kind of a process of weeding out. And that's fine. In the end, I think I get a group of hardcore fans who realize I'm not trying to define a genre. I just want to be free to write songs. And I like all kinds of music.

Ryan: I find myself in one of the categories you mentioned—someone who's a bigger fan of your later stuff with the Gamblers and the Reigning Sound as opposed to the Oblivians. And I suppose that's why it took me a while to get into *Too Much Guitar*. When I heard it for the first time, I was blown away by the highs—so much treble. Because I like the second Velvets record and Rocket From The Tombs, I didn't recognize *Too Much Guitar* as an inferior product. I just knew it was going to take some time. But after two months my ears adjusted to it. And, in the end, I loved the production. And what became apparent to me—besides your exceptional songwriting on the record—was just how good Jeremy Scott is at bass and how integral he was to the Reigning Sound's music.

Greg: He really is an amazing bass player.

Ryan: Man, he is so sick!

Greg: I know. And that's another thing—with all the records I did with Jeremy, once your ears are used to the album and you

start listening to the individual parts, and you start listening to what Jeremy is doing, you hear what a knack he has for melody. And some of those songs—at least one or two on every album—was something that came to fruition at the studio while we were recording the record. And it's indefinable to the listener. You can't tell whether the bass line he is playing is something he worked on for a while or something he just came up with on the spot. He's a natural bass player. He is something else. Then again, everyone who played on those albums added their own flavor. But I think the two definable things on those records are: 1.) my songwriting and 2.) Jeremy's bass playing.

Ryan: He just seems to have an intuitive feel for bass. Every part is perfect and doesn't seem forced. And in that sense he reminds of Rob Ritter who played with the Gun Club. Do you know that dude?

Greg: He was good.

Ryan: Yeah, he, too, has that feel. Just a strong sense of melody that carries the song so well. It's the crux, yet it's almost subversive. It's rather indefinable. The bottom line is that their bass lines are amazing.... But getting back to *Too Much Guitar*—you know Richie Unterberger kind of panned it. And I think it's like the Clash's *Sandinista!*. I don't mean stylistically similar—they have little to nothing in common in that sense—but as an amazing record that people initially passed on. Then about six months later, *Too Much Guitar* (like *Sandinista!*) really bit people it on the ass who panned with the cognition that they balked on an amazing album. Like a Dada object, what was once derided is now coveted. I think that's the mark of a good piece of art.

Greg: I know what you're saying. To some degree, there are some things on *Too Much Guitar* that I wish I would have spent a tiny more time on. There are about two tracks that could have been a little bit better. But, overall, it's a good record. It's kind of noisy. It wasn't meant to sound like that. It was just that our keyboard player left and without him the dynamics changed. With him, that would have been a totally different record.

Ryan: *Too Much Guitar* carries that tradition you have of incorporating a couple of good covers onto one of your albums; I'm thinking of the Sam and Dave track you recorded on *Too Much Guitar*, "You Got Me Hummin'." And in that sense—in addition to your Doc Pomus-esque songwriting—you're also a throwback: like the Byrds with their Carole King and Dylan songs, you also throw in some timeless Americana classic. My questions is this: have you ever wanted to do a song but, for some reason, felt you shouldn't? Like maybe you couldn't add something to it? Because I'm convinced that it's suicide to cover a Drifters's song, especially a track from the Ben E. King era. Even Jerry Lee's version of "Save the Last Dance for Me" is tepid, while George Benson should be tried by the United Nations for crimes against humanity for his version of "On Broadway."

Greg: [laughs] There are definitely songs that I've tried, I've played them out at our shows, and when I get to the recording studio I just realize, "I can't do anything more to this song or better it." So even though I love it, I just have to drop it. Unless it's an incredibly obscure song that no one has heard, you've really got to step up to the plate and do something different with it. For instance, we did a cover of the Midnighters' "Get It."

Ryan: Hank Ballard's Midnighters?

Greg: Yeah. And if you had ever heard our version of it, I don't think you'd be able to tell it was a Midnighters' song because the melody was so much faster. And it has a totally different feel to it. And that works.

If you have the right people and the right energy between those people... virtuosity is almost useless to me.

I definitely subscribe to the idea that if you cannot do something drastically different with a song then you shouldn't do it. You should just leave it alone no matter how much you love it. Even if it's your key (i.e. vocally), that doesn't mean you should do it.

Ryan: Can you recall a song that you had to drop?

Greg: When we were doing the Oblivians, there was a Larry Williams song from like 1954 that I wanted to do. I can't think of the name of it right now. And I told Tim Warren (Crypt Records founder) that I wanted to do it. To be honest, I was kind of on the fence about it. And he said, "You know, Greg, I don't think you can really bring anything else to this song." And he was right. But within a few days, I came out with my own Larry Williams-style rocker. I just put my nose to the grindstone and worked on it. But what was funny about that song, the one I came up with that was inspired by Larry Williams, was that people would always come up to me and say, "Is that a Larry Williams song?" [laughs] So sometimes you're better off going down that route. If you dig what the guy has to say, maybe just take it to heart.

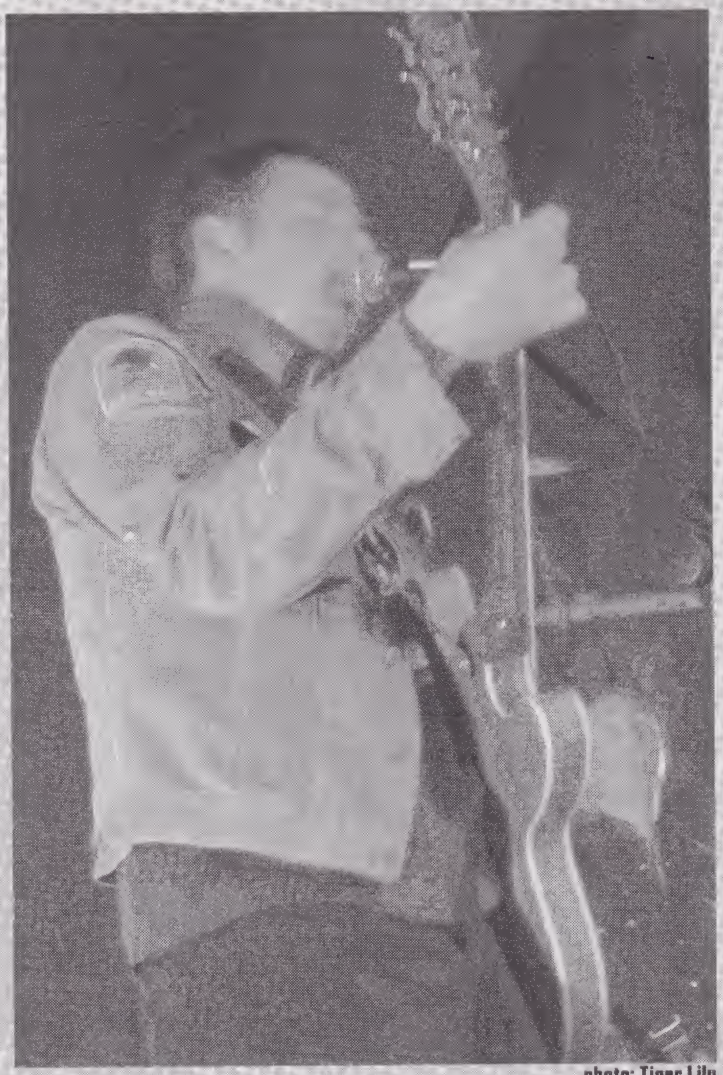


photo: Tiger Lily

Ryan: How did you hook up with Mary Weiss for the recent album you did together, *Dangerous Game*?

Greg: Billy Miller and Miriam Linna from Norton had come into contact with Mary; I think they met her at a party Rhino was hosting for that girl group box set they did (*One Kiss Can Lead to Another: Girl Group Sounds Lost and Found*); that's a great box set by the way.

Ryan: That thing's amazing!

Greg: Agreed. Anyway, Billy and Miriam started talking to Mary at the release party. They started kicking around the idea of doing a record together. Once they started working on *Dangerous Game,* they contacted me about possibly writing some songs for it. They gave Mary some CDs from my catalogue. Then Billy and Miriam got back to me. They said, "Mary really likes your stuff. Do you guys (the Reigning Sound) want to back her on the album?" And we agreed. Everything worked out really nicely. We went and cut the record with her and I gave her a bunch of material to choose from—just songs I'd written. And she picked some tracks off of older albums that she wanted to do covers of. Once we came up with enough material, we simmered it down to what would work best on the album. We recorded it and it came out pretty good.

Ryan: I was really pleased that you did that because you have a very Americana songwriting style that doesn't really exist anymore. And that tradition of writing songs for others—that goes back to people like Carol King. I was also thinking earlier of people like David Gates who did Bread, a band I don't like...

Greg: Early on, Bread had some pretty great material!

Ryan: Well, he wrote "Popsicles and Icicles" for the Murmaids, which is an incredible song. That's one of my favorite pre-Vietnam pop tracks. Anyway, you writing songs for Mary harkens back to that tradition of really good songwriters penning material for very capable singers. It was nice.

Greg: Mary was great to work with, but the hardest thing about doing records with other people is that I'm so used to choosing all the material and doing all the production work; everything is under my control. It's been that way for so long that it's very hard to give up some of that control to someone else who's singing the material. Most of the songs are mine, but I have to do it the way somebody else can work best with it—instead of the way I would do it. It's also unusual because you have other producers and the record label. We did it on Billy and Miriam's label, Norton, and they were definitely co-producers on the album. I'm used to labels that let me do what I want, turn it in, and that's that. When I worked with them, it was more like they were part of the process. That was cool, but very different for me because I'm not used to having any restraint.

Ryan: It's a situation where you're used to being the main chef and then all of a sudden you've got a bunch of cooks in your kitchen.

Greg: Exactly. I'm used to only pleasing myself. I have the confidence that if I make myself happy and I create something that seems right to me, that other people will

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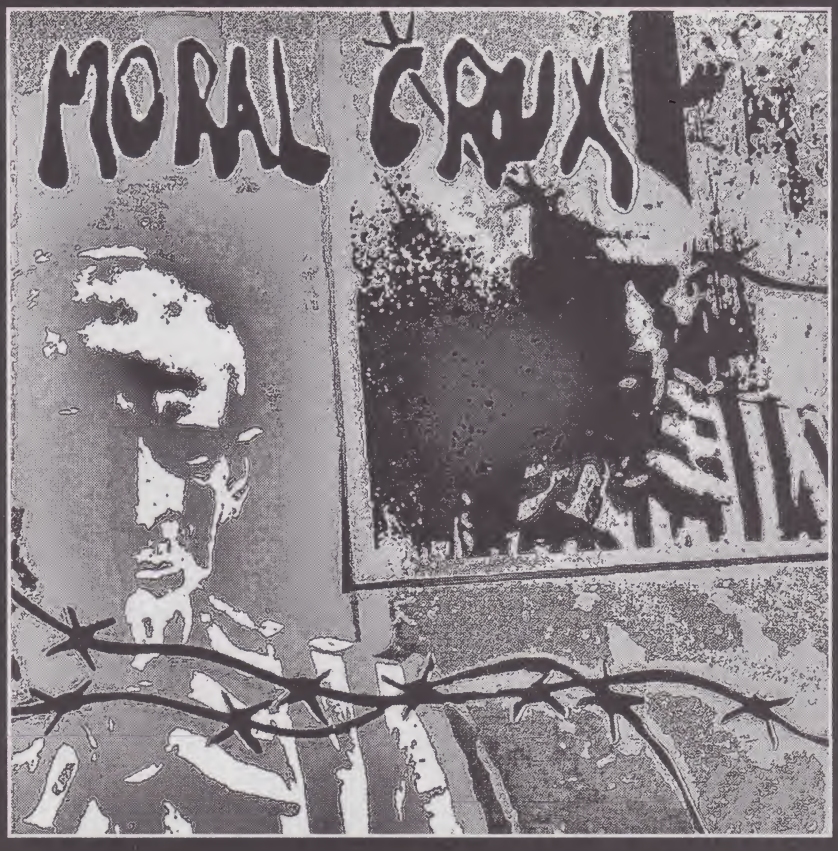

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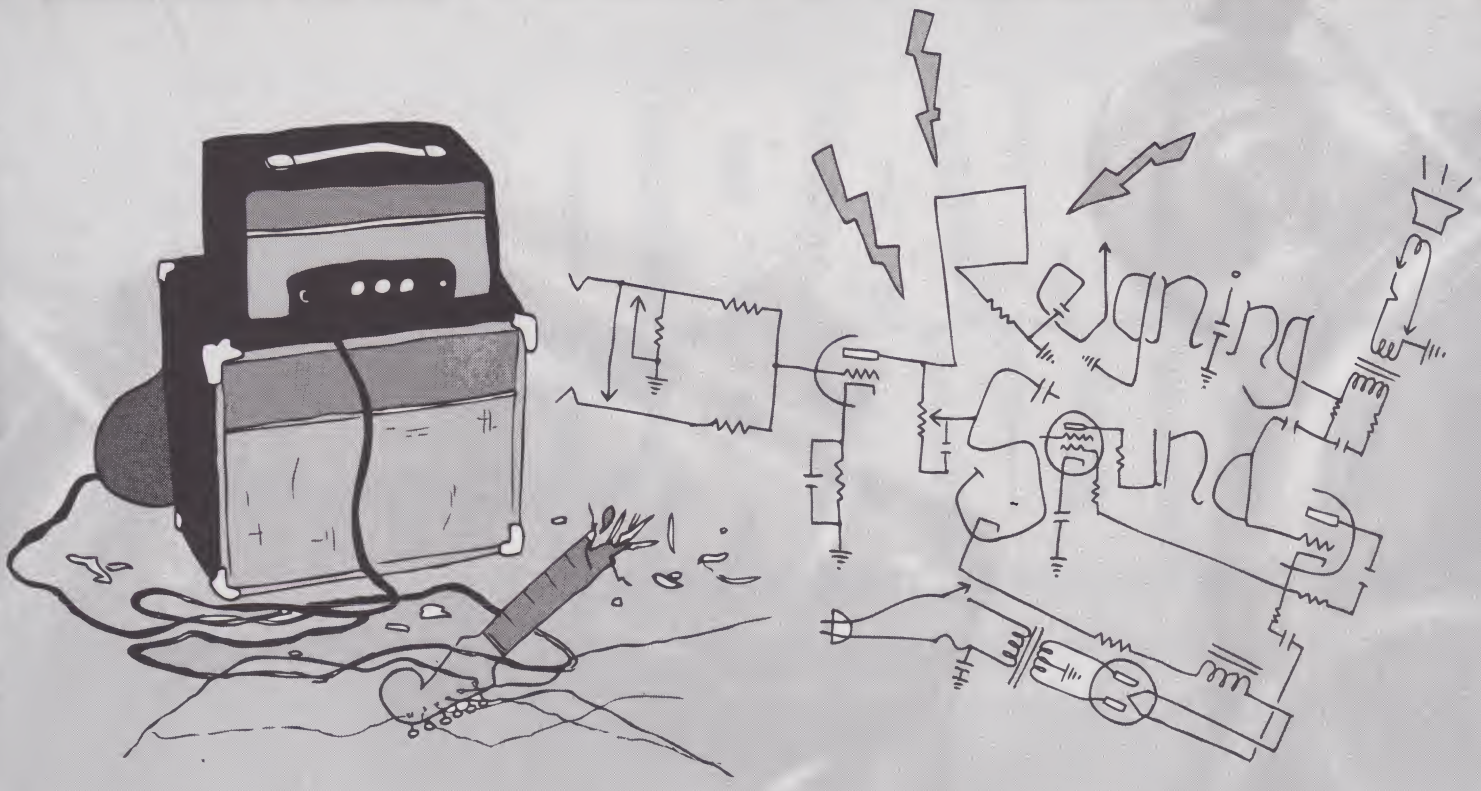


like it. But I have to realize that when you're working in a collaboration with three or four or five or six other people, everybody has a stake in what they want the album to sound like. You have to be willing to compromise.

Ryan: That's why Larry's label In the Red is kind of special. He lets people petty much do whatever they want. I think Jay Reatard recorded the drums for *Blood Visions* in an apartment. And then the rest of it, Jay recorded and produced himself. *Blood Visions* has caught on like wildfire and I think the reason it has—or at least part of the reason—was that Jay had his autonomy. He did what he wanted to do.

Greg: Larry is special in the sense that he's one of the few guys who pretty much leaves it up to the artist to make what it is they want to make. He's not in the business of making commercial art—so why in the fuck should he care if it's not pop-quality music? He realizes he's operating on the fringe of a larger entertainment industry. Larry realizes that artists know their audience and that they are usually going to make fairly sound decisions…. Larry is not trying to micromanage. A lot of labels do not understand that.

Ryan: No they don't.

Greg: And when I say that, the major labels come to mind. But a lot of the smaller labels are like that, too.

Ryan: I've got friends who run record labels out of their apartments who do that.

Greg: Yeah. It's like if you don't trust a band enough to make a good record, then you probably shouldn't try to work with them. That's how I feel about it. You don't go up to an artist like Mark Ryden and tell him: "I really like what you do, but I only want you to paint this."

Ryan: Exactly. I know what you're saying.

Greg: If you don't trust them, then you don't like their art anyway. You like the aesthetic only.

Ryan: It was kind of surreal to see you on *Conan O'Brien* with Mary Weiss. What was that like?

Greg: [sighs] We were all pretty nervous. I've never had any yearnings to be on TV. It was strange and it kind of caught me off guard. I mean, I knew for months that I was going to do it, but once you get there—all these cameras are around you—it's weird. Like all these people asked me, "Why were you wearing sunglasses? Were you trying to look cool?" And I reply, "No. I was just so nervous. I needed something in between me and everything else." [laughs]

Ryan: Are you going to do anything with Mary again?

Greg: I don't know. I don't know what Mary's plans are. I would be interested. But I couldn't do it with Norton again. It's nothing personal against the label. I just need a little more freedom when I work. If she did want to do something with Norton again, I'd gladly write songs for her to do. But if I were to play on the album, I would need to be in control of the production. It's a little disheartening when you look back on something and think "That's only halfway what I wanted. I really wanted it to sound like this." [laughs]

Ryan: Larry told me that you have a lot of stuff in the can for a new Reigning Sound record. I'm pleased to hear that.

Greg: I do. We've got the entire album down with the exception of two tracks. So we're almost done. I might want to dump a couple tracks and add some new ones, but we're pretty much set. I'm kind of working on the sequencing of songs on the album right now.

Ryan: Are there any covers on the record?

Greg: Yes. We've got a Nolan Strong and the Diablos song, "Mind Over Matter."

Ryan: Yeah, I know you like Nolan Strong a lot.

Greg: Oh, I love him! We did a Dan Penn cover called "Do Something." We also recorded that song on the *Live at Goner* album.

Ryan: So what's in the future for you, outside of the new record coming out?

Greg: I'm happy with where I'm at and I'm happy to be making another record. I finally feel like I'm at a nice place in my life. For the last fifteen or sixteen years, the music I've been making has been coming out of a lot of turmoil—things that had happened in my life. And now I feel like I'm in a different place. Three years ago I moved from Memphis to North Carolina so I'm finally feeling settled in. I'm not constantly traveling. In the future, one of two things will happen: I'll look forward to slowing down and not doing much music at all, or I'll find some happy medium where I can keep this relaxed lifestyle and still keep making records. I feel like I've given a good portion of my life to music and now I want to focus more on my family.

Ryan: And I think you've made yourself known. I have a feeling that people coming to you won't be a problem. You've pretty much solidified your place with your songwriting and producing.

Greg: That's right. I've reached "legend status." Now I can crank out really bad albums. [laughs] And people will buy them.

Ryan: [laughs] Yeah, the Greg Cartwright bio will read something like this: "Revered artist whose latter-days sins should be glossed over."

Greg: [laughs] That's right. It's all autopilot from here. I'm going to be the Thomas Kinkade of music.

EDWARD COLVER: Putting a Face on L.A. Punk

Interview by Todd Taylor and Tony Adolescent

Photos by Edward Colver // Layout by Lauren Measure

This is a case of hiding in plain sight. Chances are, if you've followed punk rock and picked up records from the early '80s that came from the West Coast, you've seen Edward Colver's photography without even knowing it. He shot pretty much every hardcore and punk band that played a show out of their garage and his work has graced around eighty albums and 45s; a who's who of that time. Edward wasn't just focusing on "hot bands" to get into print, either. He captured bands, both large and obscure: Black Flag, Circle Jerks, Social Distortion, Bad Religion, Youth Brigade, The Gun Club, Middle Class, Legal Weapon, Circle One, The Vandals, JuJu Hounds, and on and on and on. In an era before widespread videotaping, photographers were the ones who put the face to much of underground music. Edward was in the thick of it, going to—and documenting—over a thousand shows in five years; out at least five nights a week.

I'm always cautious using the word "iconic," when explaining an artist's body of work. Yet, I was powerfully reminded of the breadth and depth of Edward's contribution to punk rock in his book, *Blight at the End of the Funnel*. He was one of the most prolific supporters who, literally, gave an enduring face to punk rock music that sprang from Southern California. It also does us good to remember that this was during a time when punk in Los Angeles was—by society, the press, and even New York punks—being dismissed as an angry, reactionary fad; or worse yet, merely poseurs. What did suburban youth in a sunny climate have to be pissed about? Punk wasn't something seriously considered by "the establishment" and it was certainly viewed as something that would never have widespread, mass appeal. According to the critics with larger microphones and more column-inches, punk had even less artistic merit. Why bother wasting film on it? Thankfully, Edward Colver saw it differently and captured it obsessively. In doing so, he shaped how it would later be viewed, be considered. Beyond the music itself etched in a groove of vinyl, he provided the hard evidence of an irrefutable musical flash burn on the collective musical mind. That's iconic.

This isn't an interview about a dude who pointed an instrument of metal and glass in a general direction, then dumbly pressed a button in front of a bunch of interesting folks banging away at instruments. Edward, first and foremost, is a living, broad-spectrum artist whose interests still include graphic design, sculpture, ceramics, print making, antique collecting, and flower arrangement; not just photography. All of those interests funneled into taking great shots, classic shots. I also, thankfully, got to find out that he is a smart, passionate, and funny guy who didn't see a dichotomy between loud, fast music and, say, pieces of well-built furniture. It all fit into his frame of reference of what was important.

He's an artist who shouldn't be forgotten.

Todd: Can you give me some basic background: when you were born, where you're from?

Edward: I was born June 17th, 1949, and lived in the San Gabriel Valley my whole life. I was born in the same hospital my father was. My great grandfather and grandfather raised oranges in Covina and my dad was a forest ranger.

Todd: Your dad was an experimental forest ranger?

Edward: He was in charge of the 17,000-acre experimental forest in the San Gabriel Foothills. They did acid rain studies, reforestation, burn control. You know that borate retardant that they dump on the fires? Through their studies, they discovered that wild mustard seeds were the fastest growing plant with the biggest root ball to retain the soil, so in the fire retardant they put wild mustard seeds and fertilizer. When they're putting out the fire, they're re-seeding it and fertilizing it all at once. Pretty neat.

Todd: Many of our readers would most be familiar with your punk rock photography. Where did you get you're first camera?

Edward: I stole it from the factory where I was working. [laughs] Now they can really trace me. Some clown from the front office left it out in the warehouse. It was a cheap 35mm camera. A friend of mine told me it was worth thirty-five dollars and I was like, "Perfect." A dollar a millimeter. It was a Yashica Rangefinder. I was working at White Freightliner building diesel trucks back then. And I couldn't relate to anybody I was working with.

Todd: What was being played on the radio at that time? What were you listening to?

Edward: Not a lot of popular stuff, even then. I was really big on avant-garde classical music and electronic music. The real stuff, not electronica. Ever since I was a teenager, I started collecting antiques and listening to that stuff. I heard John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Toru Takemitsu, Kristof Penderecki and stuff like that. I was studying art and it just totally changed my life hearing that music. Just like when punk rock hit, it was like, "Woah, there's this out there." It just creates a whole new awareness. I always called those guys classical punks, because they were doing all this atonal and pushing stuff and doing all kinds of weird stuff. In the late '60s, I had a lot of heavy psychedelic music. I didn't like the pop psychedelic music, but I liked the (13th Floor) Elevators and Blue Cheer, and all those kinds of bands: The Velvet Underground. Stooges.

Todd: You also cite dada and surrealism. Can you give us some examples of the overlap that you saw of those movements and punk rock? A little bit of a Venn diagram.

Edward: I think there's a lot of ways they relate: sort of experimental, free form, out of control, trying new things, stuff like that. It kind of relates in that way, I guess. Breaking the molds.

Todd: What was the first punk rock show you went to and how did you find out about it?

Edward: The first show I went to—I'm actually embarrassed to say it—Madame Wong's.

Todd: Why are you embarrassed to say it?

Edward: Because that place sucked, and they never had any good bands.

Tony: Entry-level punk club.

Edward: It wasn't even punk. It was more new wave. I saw a news report and I thought that looked interesting and I wanted to check it out. And the first band I saw of that whole genre was The Robert Stoddard Band (future L.A. Guns) and there were people actually pogoing, which was pretty funny. Boing, boing, boing. I actually saw The Motels quite a bunch, and I absolutely love those guys before they cut their record. They were not punk, but they were awesome. They were real dark and moody.

Todd: Because their records aren't very good.

Edward: The first record is the only good one, and that's the way it is with all bands, though. There's one out of a hundred that can make it past the first record.

Todd: What was the name of the first record? I don't even remember.

Tony: It was just *The Motels*. The record didn't translate to how they sounded at all.

Edward: With a sunburned old lady on the cover. Right away, I made the distinction; Steve Blush put this outtake in the *American Hardcore* movie, where somebody says, "Are you into new wave?" And I say, "Fuck no. I like punk rock." People compare 'em, but it's like a different world. There's nothing to do with it.

Todd: Demarcation line.

Tony: There was definitely, in Chinatown, something different going on across the alley.

Edward: Remember the ads for the Hong Kong Café? "Right across the alley from Madam What's-her-name." [laughs] That was choice. I jumped over to the Hong Kong immediately.

Tony: You look over and it's like, "There's something really interesting going on over there that's not happening here."

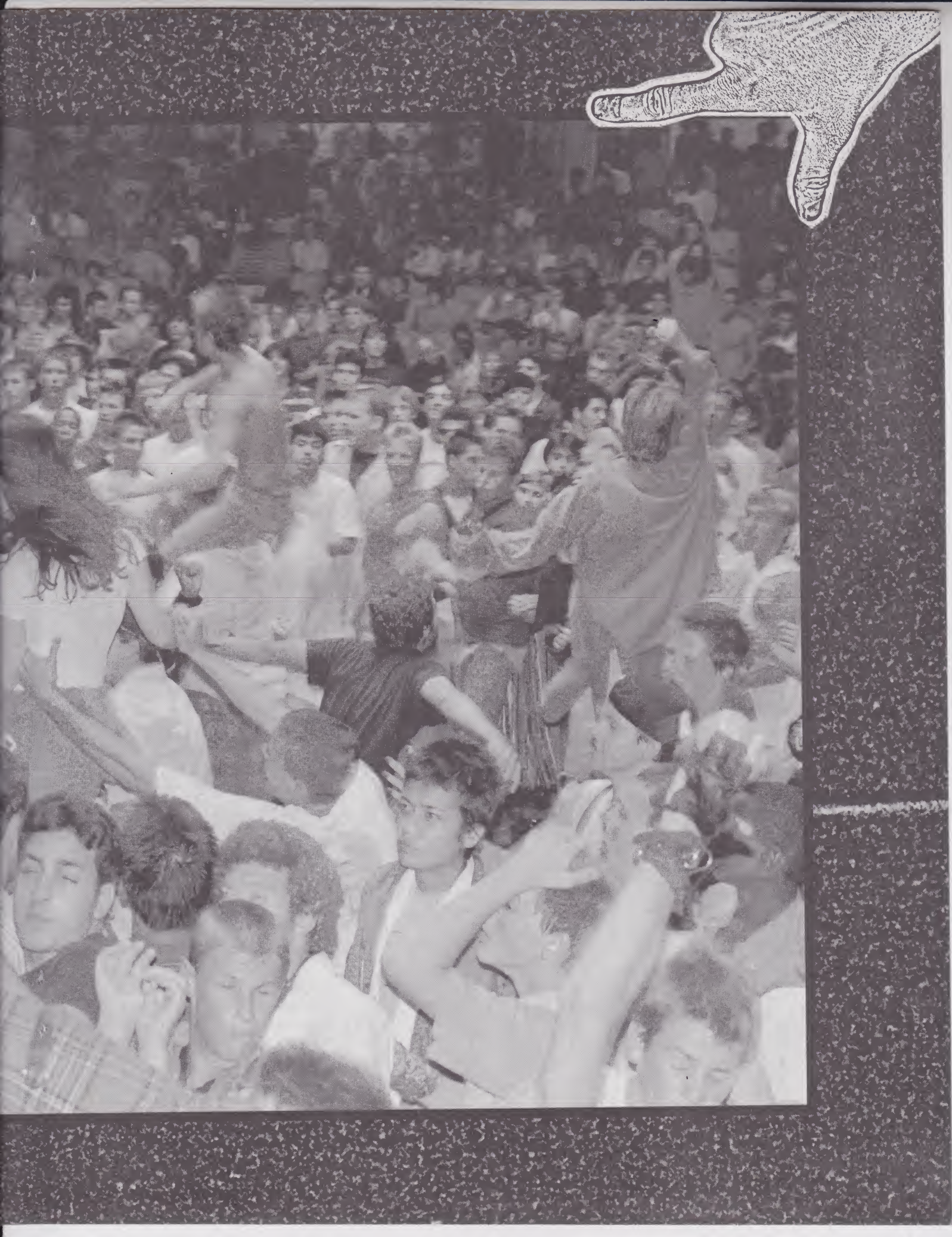
Todd: They were within eyeshot of one another on Gin Ling Way.

Edward: They faced one another. I saw The Bags, and Fear, and X, and Circle Jerks all there, and I was just totally hooked on that stuff immediately.

People say, "Well, I got all this pink hair." And I always thought that was just peripheral junk.

IT AIN'T ABOUT PINK HAIR.

That's kind of the way I looked at it.



I was just an ART MONSTER since I was little kid.

Todd: When did you start taking pictures?
Edward: Real late '78.
Tony: How did you go from just the guy who took the camera, to the guy that's taking pictures at shows? Were you shooting other things first?
Edward: No. I started taking pictures of shows, and I was sending all the negatives out to Thrifty's. (A drug store, that later became Rite Aid.) [laughs]
Todd: Did it take a week to get the film back?
Edward: Yeah. That kind of stuff. A friend of mine from high school was a student aide teacher of a photography class down at Mt. Sac. "If you take some pictures, bring the negatives over and we'll make some prints." And I started printing stuff. Pretty soon after, I got a darkroom set up, and started just living in there for a long time. [To Tony] Remember Robert Hill, the half-Japanese guy? He was always with me; he went to around three hundred shows with me. He and I were good friends and he lived a couple blocks away from me.
Tony: I remember your darkroom was your home at that time. I remember going over once and watching you do the whole process of it. And not just the house in Covina, but the warehouse, too.
Edward: Oh yeah, The Brewery. When I lived in Covina, TSOL was going on tour and they wanted a hundred copies of the same photo and I was trying to get those done, they're just drying everywhere. Once I got my own darkroom, I was just going nuts, printing so much stuff it was crazy.

That Wasted Youth flip shot, I had it developed and printed the next day, and I took it to a show at Bard's Apollo. (Edward's talking about quite possibly his most recognized shot of a stage diver doing a front flip into the crowd, with a Wasted Youth patch on the back of his pants.) I shot that picture in Pasadena. [To Tony] Was that the only punk rock show they had at Perkin's Palace?
Todd: Several. Not many.
Tony: I played there with DOA and Stiff Little Fingers.
Edward: That was the show I took that photograph at. That was the Fourth of July. That's weird, because Bev Davies, DOA's photographer, sent us a copy. She had an outtake, from the crowd of where the photo was from, and it wasn't as good. And it was good because of the fact that I was on stage, that guy's silhouette was totally awesome. She had the date on it and everything.
Tony: I have a flier from that show that I made.
Edward: Oh, that's good; I'd like to see that. I don't know if I have one. I don't even remember Stiff Little Fingers. I always say it was a DOA/ Adolescents show. [laughs]
Todd: Did you find yourself—when you went into a club—of finding the best places to stand to take photos?
Edward: Yeah, looking for vantage points. I've watched people take photos. They'll be standing there with a camera, standing there, standing there, standing there, and then click. I'd be, "What did you just take?" They'll stand there for two or three minutes and what they shot was nothing special. All of a sudden, just arbitrarily shot it. I would shoot pictures, actually, to the rhythm of the music. I knew when people were going to jump and I was ready for it. If you weren't, you didn't get it. There was nothing to it, almost. You'd have to predict it.
Todd: Familiarity with the music… What's the worst thrashing your equipment's taken?
Edward: Oh, the worst thing ever? Originally, I was shooting available light photos and then there was some action stuff that I was like, "I can't get that" and it was a drag and I had to get a flash. Actually, I worked real hard at trying to take available light photos and I used to switch the flash on and off and pray that once I turned it back on it'd come on in time to use it. But I would shut it off and open the camera up and shoot a lot of available light pictures, which are more interesting.

I had my flash broken off the hot shoe by a boot flying over me. For a long time, I had duct tape going from the right side of the camera, up over the flash, to hold onto the camera down onto the other side. And I used to change film in the pit and keep that junk intact. I would take it off, keep it there, load another roll of film, and then tape it back on.
Tony: With chaos going on around him.
Edward: That was pretty amazing.
Todd: Was there any time that you were so excited to see a shot and then you had some sort of equipment failure?
Edward: I remember this one time I was rolling some negatives in my old darkroom and I guess I just kept my eyes closed and never thought about it, but I opened them up and it was like, "I can see everything in here." I was loading some stuff of The Gun Club and I guess my mom had taken the towel down off the outside of the bathroom window I was using and I was throwing a fit. Actually, the film came out, but I could totally see in the room. It didn't seem to even fog the film. It was kind of weird.
Todd: What was the first show that you photographed?
Edward: It was The Motels at Madame Wong's. Afraid so. As far as I recall, I should have been taking pictures in the '60s when I was seeing everybody back then. I was older than all the punks. I saw The Mothers (of Invention) in 1966. I saw The Cream at the Whiskey, I saw The Kinks at the Whiskey, and T. Rex at the Whiskey. All kinds of cool shows. I don't like The Cream much except, when they put out their first album, they were good. That first Cream record, that was when I saw 'em.
Todd: Tony brought to my attention that you intentionally shoot in black and white.
Edward: Oh yeah, I hardly ever did any color unless somebody wanted something in color.
Todd: But it was more than just convenience.
Edward: It's much more interesting-looking and also I can print it, develop it, and manipulate it on my own. I don't have any of the color stuff. People say, "Well, I got all this pink hair." And I always thought that was just peripheral junk. It ain't about pink hair. That's kind of the way I looked at it.
Tony: I *remember* the colors.
Edward: The color pictures I took looked too weird and fun. It glamorized it too much in a weird way or something, I think.
Tony: Yeah, I thought it cheapened it a lot.
Todd: For some reason, I look at people's faces more in black and white. I'm less inclined to be distracted by one thing. Edward, I can identify your photographs—especially your posed stuff, when it's the entire band—just from their facial expressions. There's definitely something happening when you took a shot of these people. Do you give any instruction?
Edward: Generally not, but I was just an art monster since I was little kid. I've got my seventh-grade art notebook and that's all I ever cared about was art. I studied art, graphic design, ceramics, print making, and all that—but not photography—and I think that totally fit into it. I don't think there are many photographers who ever studied art. They studied photography. When I would take a full-stage shot, I would try like crazy to get every band member in there, otherwise it wasn't worth taking. You got the guitar guy leaning against the singer, and that's good? That isn't the band. I never took pictures of two or three people, ever. It was one close-up or the whole band. Like the pictures I got of the Dead Kennedys at the Whiskey in '79; everybody shows, and the drummer is like, "Cool, I'm in there." Yeah, he outta be, you know? [laughs]
Tony: One of the things I always liked about your stuff was that if you got a look at those band shots, you got a sense of how that band works together.
Edward: I realized that there was sort of an image to capture, but it couldn't really be BS. This isn't the kind of band that has the smoke machine going on.
Todd: No laser light show.

Edward: I was kind of cognizant of that and just trying to do pictures that didn't look lame. That had credibility. That was all-important. I didn't want it to look stupid. You can clown around, but you know what I mean? There's just a difference.

Todd: I'm thinking of bands like Middle Class or Circle One that were more militant or serious. They seemed to be staring at person looking at the photograph, right though the photographer.

Edward: I got one of John Macias that he just looked like he was gonna kill someone. He had his mic in one hand and his other arm, just swingin' forward. He's so big. You know he got shot and killed on Santa Monica pier?

Todd: Yeah. (See *Razorcakes* #37 and #38 for the full Circle One story.)

Tony: It wasn't like people would move or react differently because Edward was there, but there was also a familiarity with him being there. For me, if a photographer showed up that I didn't know, stuck his camera in my face and started—Edward didn't use a flash a lot—that was one of the things that was nice. It was kind of intimidating to get out in front of this very aggressive audience and have someone flash a light in your face. So the bands didn't hate him. The fans didn't hate him.

Edward: I try not to be obtrusive at all. Even though I was on stage, I wouldn't get in the way. I was cognizant. Some people get out there and just stand around and do stuff, and people are like, "What are you doing?"

Todd: People in the band tripping over them or they're unplugging instruments… When did you take the leap from going to shows and photographing bands to shooting album covers?

Edward: Right away. Actually, I got my first picture published from the Hong Kong Café. It was of Johanna Went with a pair of mannequin legs on her head. I got it published in *Bam!* three months after I started taking pictures, which was weird because it was through a friend who collected Stickley furniture. They said, "Come over for dinner," and their sister-in-law or something was Reagan McMahon and Blair Jackson from *Bam!*, and they told me, "Bring some photos. We heard you were taking pictures." And I took them and they were like, "Oh, we're doing an article on her. Can we use some of the photos?" And it just happened like that, which is pretty strange. My student teacher friend; he wanted to do photography, and here I grab a camera and got one published three months later. I went nuts with it. "This is great." I was always broke, livin' at home. I had money for gas, film, and coffee and that was about it.

Todd: Do you think there was any competition between punk rock photographers at that time? Jenny Lens was around.

Edward: You know what? I never saw her around at all, because she didn't go to hardcore shows.

Todd: How do you think your obsessions snowball so much? You say that you went to a thousand shows in five years.

Edward: [To Tony] Yeah, well, you saw me every time you went out, I bet.

Tony: Everywhere. .

Edward: I had this idea that it would be so cool to chronologically put the fliers together: Wednesday, September 5th, 1980, there were these three shows and these three fliers from that night. Because there were shows every night of the week—it was freaky—all the time.

Todd: What's something that you regret, dealing with punk rock?

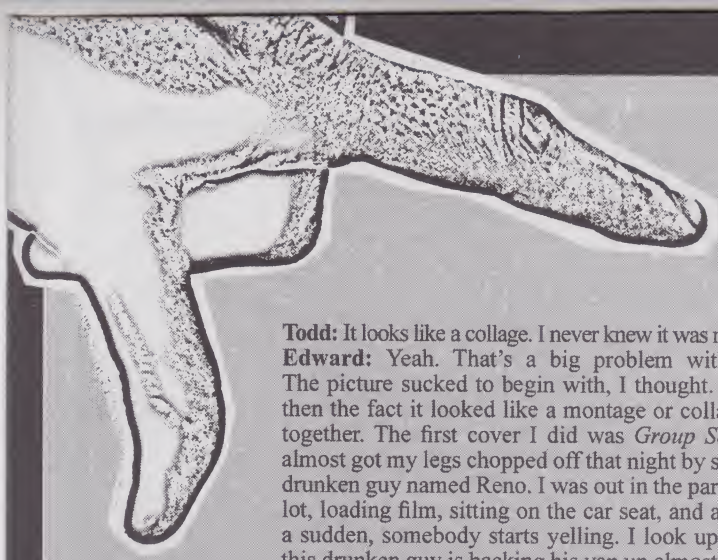
Edward: When I had an eye injury, I sold all my punk rock singles like a dummy, but I kept all my Flipper singles. They're not going anywhere.

Todd: *Sex Bomb Baby*?

Edward: Yeah. I got that out in Target (Video) when I was doing my worst album cover, the *Wild in the Streets* (Circle Jerks) one.

Tony: Right. It's in color.

Edward: That one sucks. The graphic designer knocked the guys out in black and white and that made them look dropped-in. The Circle Jerks crashed a street parade out there in San Francisco and , they're all nervous because they walked right out in front of a parade and I'm running out in front of them, sliding to a stop, turning around, trying to focus, and they're marching.



Todd: It looks like a collage. I never knew it was real.
Edward: Yeah. That's a big problem with it. The picture sucked to begin with, I thought. And then the fact it looked like a montage or collaged together. The first cover I did was *Group Sex*. I almost got my legs chopped off that night by some drunken guy named Reno. I was out in the parking lot, loading film, sitting on the car seat, and all of a sudden, somebody starts yelling. I look up and this drunken guy is backing his van up almost into my car door. That was at Gerber and Rob Hanley's wedding. Social Distortion played as a three piece.
Todd: Did you ever run into cops trying to confiscate your film for evidence?
Edward: They wouldn't let me in The Olympic one time because I was wearing a police shirt. They said, "You take that off now or you're going to get arrested for impersonating an officer." I said, "Yeah, like I look like a cop." [laughs]
Edward: I photographed the cops at the all the riots and stuff and never had any direct problems with them at all.
Todd: Were there any calls afterwards that were like, "Hey we had a problem. We want to see if anybody has photos."?
Edward: After the Huntington Park not-happening Exploited show, *The Weakling* (*L.A. Weekly*) and *The Bleeder* (*Los Angeles Reader*) called me up, and both said, "You were there last night? We want pictures." So I printed up three different pictures that I had taken that night and gave them both sets of three. They both published the same photo and they were all mad at me. "This is a news photo and you guys were clamoring for it." And they were like, "That's not cool. They ran the same picture. We don't want to pay you for it," and that was the last time I worked for them.
Todd: When was that?
Edward: '83, probably.
Todd: Being from the San Gabriel Valley, did you have a favorite East L.A. band to film or hang out with?
Tony: I don't remember it being that regional.
Edward: I had four teenagers try to jump me outside of The Vex one night. It was pretty funny. I pulled out a switchblade—I used to have it so it was point-down in my pocket and I just grabbed it—and stood them off and they about croaked. They were coming at me with a tire iron. They were like, "Huh?"... I was in Hollywood and—as much as I hated going to Orange County—I was down there all the time.
Tony: You shot a lot of film at The Cuckoo's Nest.
Edward: When I did TSOL's first record, I painted out all the clouds that so they couldn't tell it was taken at The Cuckoo's Nest. The photo's in the book—the un-retouched one—from the album cover.
Tony: Just looking at the angle of the shot though, you can tell it's at The Cuckoo's Nest because of the way the band had to face.
Edward: I turned that into a stat print (a high-contrast black and white print with no gray) and repaired some of the lettering on one of the amps. I took out a mic stand—because there's a mic stand and Jack's finger just looked like it was laying on it.
Tony: Like it's being propped up
Edward: Yeah, it just looked stupid.
Todd: Tell me the story of the Channel 3 *Fear of Life* album. (It's a photograph of a revolver pointing at a man about to commit suicide, the hammer cocked back.)
Edward: That was an outtake photo from when I did the (Black Flag's) *Damaged* album cover.
Todd: The picture is you.
Edward: That's my hand on my gun. I shot that picture by myself. I put the camera on a tripod and focused on my front door and it was at twenty-seven inches. I walked the camera out to the driveway—it was a dark background—and I measured twenty-seven inches, hit the timer, and stood like that. I only did two frames, and they both came out. And if it had been a quarter inch up or down, it wouldn't even have even fit in the frame. I should have done it farther away.
Tony: Why? It was perfect. [laughter]
Edward: It was kinda weird. Did you hear that the mirror from *Damaged* session was for sale in *Goldmine* six years ago for $4,000? I should have kept that.
Todd: It's a broken mirror, too.
Edward: You can identify it by the cracks, you know.
Todd: I guess you can.
Edward: You couldn't fake that in a million years. That was my idea to do that on the back cover. I layed it on the sidewalk at a little bit of an angle so it wouldn't bounce the flash back, and shot it. That picture looks cool because it looks like this energy is running though it. It came out neat.
Todd: Why did Black Flag say no to the gun cover?
Edward: Well, originally, we were going to do a liner sleeve photo with all these different photos in it, and they didn't do any of that stuff, so it just got killed. And then Channel 3 said, "We want you to do our album cover and we have to have it done in two days." [laughs] "What are you calling the album?" And they said *Fear of Life,* and I'm like, "I got your picture."
Todd: Perfect.
Edward: And then I took it in; threw it on Robbie's (Posh Boy) desk and he says, "This is cool. It makes you think." And then he was like, "Ohh, I might get in trouble using this." And he was waffling back and forth and when I left I didn't know if they were going to use it or not, but they did.
Todd: I was also curious about the photo you took of Bad Religion throwing a brick through a car window. Was that staged?
Edward: "Here we are. Let's do this... on the count of three." It was an abandoned car up by the Hollywood Bowl, up by the cross, doing that picture that same night (*How Could Hell Be Any Worse?*). Making due with what's there.
Todd: L.A. was perfect for that at that time. There was an abundance of abandoned stuff with glass in it.
Edward: [To Tony] I liked that picture I took of you guys out in Pomona, in Casey's (Royer) farm place, with the sprinklers and the scarecrow. That one's fun.
Edward: I hung out with you guys (Adolescents) and TSOL more than anybody. We had a ball.
Tony: None of us knew what we were really doing. We knew we were doing something, that it was important. You could tell, just by looking at Edward's stuff that it was the shit. You knew it wasn't crap, from the gate.
Edward: Looking back, if anybody had ever told me how important and how much this would affect pop culture, I would have never believed them. I knew this stuff was significant when I was seeing it and what was going on was important, and I never would have thought it would have become mainstream. Ever.
Todd: Why not?
Edward: It was too wild.
Tony: It was too crazy. It was insane.
Edward: Too nuts. But now it's been co-opted. Oh, I was so fucking pissed off when I saw the cover of the *Rolling Stone*. They have Green Day—"The Day That Punk Broke"—as the cover story. Ohh, so mad. "What do you mean 'punk'? Those guys suck." People say, "Early on, they were kind of punk." They're pop, not punk.
Tony: A power pop band. I've listened to their records. I think *American Idiot*'s really a pretty bold record.
Edward: Really?
Tony: For a mainstream record, yeah. But, it's a pop record.
Todd: When did you stop shooting live punk rock?
Edward: Late '83.
Todd: Was it gradual?
Edward: I wouldn't say it was really gradual. I just kind of stopped. I kind of thought it was all over.
Tony: It didn't feel the same in 1983.
Todd: What changed?
[Tony is flipping through *Blight at the End of the Funnel.*]

MINOR THREAT

Edward: There are a lot of dead people in there.
Tony: '82, '83, there were factions. Subgenres broke off. There was a rootsier, a rock, a death rock, and a glammy rock faction—that would spur that Sunset Strip revival. There was a lot of stuff splitting up. If you look at what was going on in the rock scene there, it makes perfect sense because things had already splintered. It wasn't really a central, core group. Before that, you'd have three shows in a night, but they'd be punk shows and there was a lot of interplay between the bands.
Edward: The Gun Club all fit in, back in that weirdness. They weren't punk at all.
Tony: They opened an Adolescents show at the Starwood.
Edward: I wasn't around in '84 at all. All those thrash bands started up in the (San Fernando) Valley.
Tony: It was the birth of the Cathay De Grande. The style of music—Nardcore (Oxnard hardcore) was starting to come in.
Edward: The thrash stuff, which I just didn't get into at all.
Tony: DRI. Corrosion Of Conformity.
Edward: All of that stuff is like, "Eh, you're losing me." I did around eighty punk rock record covers and shot all of these bands and had been to over a thousand shows. What more am I going to do? No offense to any of the bands. I wasn't tired of them, but I'd seen them all, all this time. Then I was "doing photography," so I wanted to do something else. Make some money, maybe. Make a living at it because I enjoyed doing it. So I started branching out and doing different stuff and that's when I started working with I.R.S. Records. I met them through doing that horrible *Wild in the Streets* cover. Then I started doing stuff with Lords Of The New Church and Wall Of Voodoo.
Todd: I know you have photo credit in Aerosmith's *Get a Grip* record.
Edward: They used two of my sculptures, actually. I took the pictures.
Todd: What were the largest changes you had to adapt to work with… Snoop Dogg and music like that?
Edward: I didn't change too much. I just realized it was a different vibe.
Todd: Nowadays, how do you get jobs?
Edward: I've done photography for twenty-nine years now, and I never, ever advertised, don't solicit work, and my phone number is unpublished. I'm really happy with that.
Todd: It seems to me that you're doing a good job of having the right people come to you.
Edward: Well, I was always out. I used to drag my pictures around and show them to anybody who would sit still long enough and go, "Hey, look at these."
Todd: When you diverged with hardcore, you covered early R.E.M. Were you as into the music?
Edward: I enjoyed those guys. They were all right. Yeah. They were cool people.
Todd: Did you have the same intimacy with them? Didn't you go on tour with them?
Edward: They took me out on a two-and-a-half week East coast college tour.
Todd: As much access as you wanted?
Edward: I could stop the tour bus if I wanted; if I saw a place I wanted to take pictures. I hardly had any gear. If I had a bunch of equipment, it would have been really cool, but I had a good time.
Todd: You shot Linkin Park?
Edward: They used some of my pictures inside their new album. Some live stuff when they were rehearsing.
Todd: How is that set up? Is it lucrative in and of itself?
Edward: Shooting that kind of thing? I don't pursue it. It just came my way and I said I'd do it. I got paid three grand, so that was pretty cool, but it was kind of a nightmare. I was supposed to do four different setups and I got there and I'm working away, and the first one I set up, I didn't end up liking at all and I was in the middle of setting up the second shoot and they said, "Are you almost done?" I was like, "What?" "Oh, we need to be wrapped up in an hour." Nobody ever told me any time constraints or anything. I was kind of flipping out. I ended up getting more time. Finally, I did three setups instead

of four. The one set of pictures I did in this little hut-like house up on a hillside; those were cool and I haven't seen them used… check cleared.

Todd: Do you have to deal with a lot of "personalities" now? A lot of rock star stuff?

Edward: No, I don't pursue it. I don't do it.

Todd: Were the Linkin Park guys…

Edward: A good friend of mine lives with Chester, who was really cool. Got along fine with them. They seemed to know me, or my work. Personality-wise, who are the biggest assholes I've ever worked with? Steve Jones (Sex Pistols) was on the top of the list for a long time. He was so obnoxious it blew my mind. Ike Turner: ridiculous. BB King, twice. Total asshole. Todd Rundgren, twice. Total asshole. You think they might have a chance of redeeming themselves. No.

Todd: How about Andy Warhol?

Edward: He was fine. Quiet. Cheech and Chong were really obnoxious.

Todd: Obnoxious—good or bad?

Edward: Bad… I don't like taking non-flattering pictures of anybody, but I really wanted to take one of Michael Jackson. I photographed him at The Grammys. No chance of getting a bad one. He was wearing sunglasses, so you can't even get him blinking.

Todd: Any other non-punk notables?

Edward: I did an album cover for Adrian Zmed from *TJ Hooker*. I photographed Haircut 100, even. Joey Escalante (The Vandals) had me in on his show. Why he didn't just have me phone it in, I'll never know. "Oh, I want to have you on the show with your book." "Okay, cool." He wanted me there at eight o'clock. I'm driving over there, just freaking out. I can't find a place to park. I get up there and I wait twenty-five minutes to be on there for two-and-a-half minutes. "You had me come over here for this?" He said, "Well, tell us about the book." "Oh, it's got Haircut 100 and Flock Of Seagulls. All the heavyweights." Just totally joking around. And I never got to refute it. Most people would have laughed and known what was going on, but it's like, "Wait, I don't even get to back this up?"

Todd: "I think Edward Colver's lost touch."

Edward: Or lost credibility. Thanks. I photographed The Fonz one time at a celebrity baseball game. He said, "Don't take a picture of me smoking a cigarette." It made me want to, but I didn't. I had an old girlfriend who worked for a soap opera magazine and would get me jobs. Money. I didn't get money for the punk stuff, so I got some goofy-assed jobs. Not a lot of them, though. I did the pilot photos for David Hasselhoff, who was doing these stupid adventure things after he came off a soap opera, before he did *Knight Rider*. I photographed him at Anacapa Island scuba diving and at Bob Bondurant's School of High Performance Driving up in San Francisco. He actually ditched the film crew and took me out to this restaurant on the wharf called Scoma's and bought lunch. He was really nice. Then I saw him years later outside of MCA and I stood around, wanting to say, "Hey, remember me?" and he was such a jerk, it blew my mind. I wanted to punch him. Celebrity.

Todd: Where is the strangest place you've seen your photos show up?

Edward: This really actually annoys the hell out of me. I gave Steve Blush all that stuff to use in *American Hardcore* and when the movie came out, my stuff was showing up all over the place and it said "Sony Pictures Classics" with my name not on it, and that might not be a strange place, but that was really upsetting me. "So Sony owns my photos now? No."

Todd: What happened with that?

Edward: He said, "Oh, sorry." And nothing ever transpired over it. I used to always give my stuff to all these projects: to books, to movies. "Here you go." So much of my same stuff because I foisted this pile of pictures off on these guys doing a movie. They all started having montages that looked the same.

Todd: Did you know that your Danny Spiro (of Wasted Youth) picture would be on the cover of *American Hardcore*?

Edward: When they used it, for the book, yes. Chuck Burke wasn't happy about the CD booklet's pictures. "I don't want Sony using my image to promote that stuff," so he was kind of pissed about that.

Todd: Did you get paid for the cover?

Edward: I got paid two thousand bucks for all the pictures they used in the film, so that was something. I *gave* them the pictures for the *American Hardcore* book. I didn't charge them a cent for 'em.

Tony: The spoils belong to the victor and it's the person who writes it: that person who has money, that backing, whoever that publisher is that wants to give them the bank.

Edward: Like that "Forming" (punk art exhibit) show in Santa Monica, that was so heavy duty to solidify X's place in history to me. It was like, "What's going on here?" That was a weird show. They put up all my stuff in there with no credit on any of it. I was so pissed. I go to the opening. Cool. "What? No name tags on any of this stuff?"

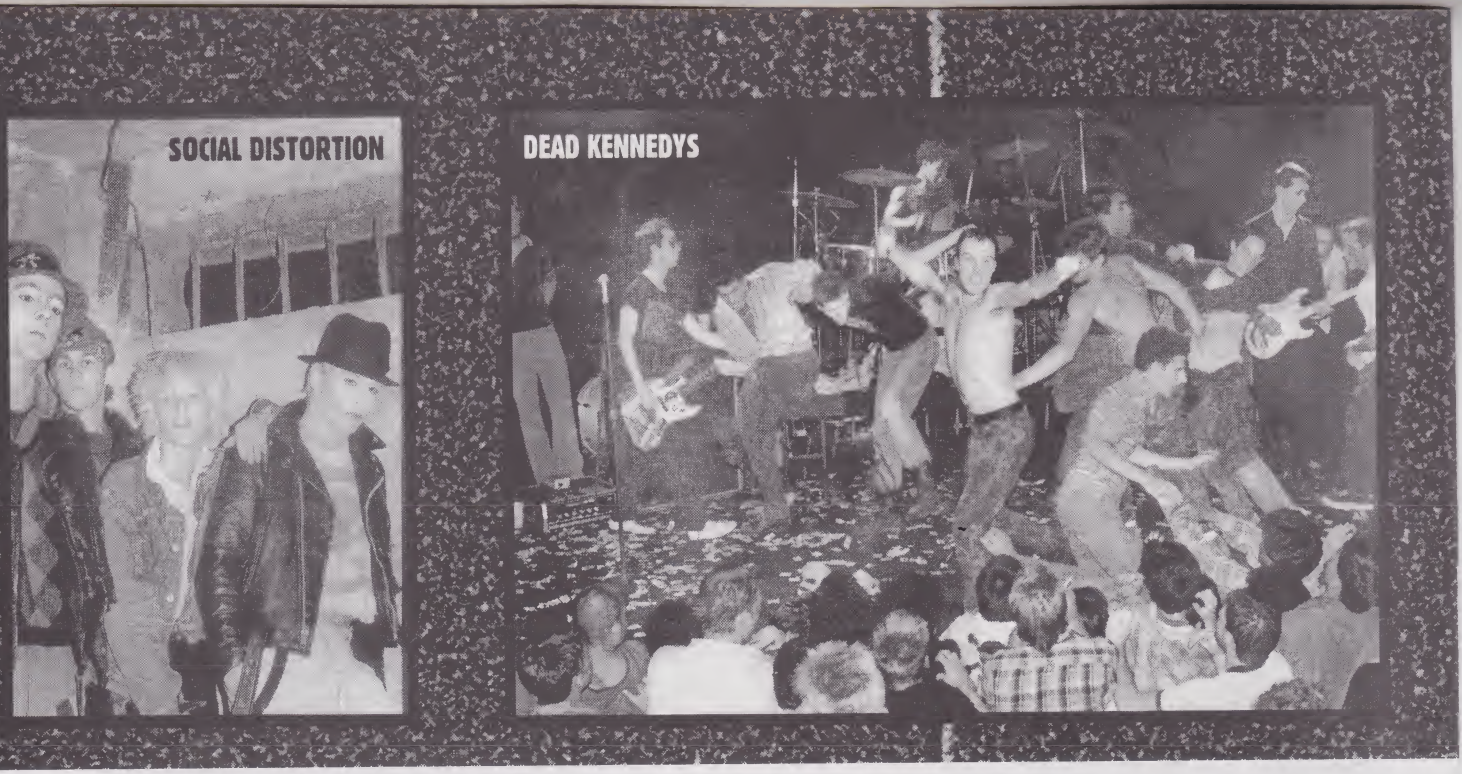
Todd: You should have brought a marker.

Edward: I did. I wrote on the glass with a felt marker the next day. What the heck?

Todd: Coming from a magazine/fanzine point of view, when *American Hardcore* quoted *Time* magazine, it'll give both the magazine and the author credit. Any time a fanzine's mentioned, it just mentions the fanzine. Oh, so the people working for those fanzines aren't important enough to credit personally?

Tony: That's interesting. So it's the brand that's actually recognized and not the individual that makes up the collective. I wonder if it's accidental or intentional.

Todd: If it wasn't so pervasive and didn't



happen so many times in a row, I would say it's accidental… What about merchandising?

Edward: Everybody was making T-shirts out of my stuff. It's still going on. But, I'm starting to change that now. "Hey, if you're still selling these twenty-five years later, it's about time you cut me in on it." There are all kinds of bootlegs of my stuff. Lani (Edward's wife) looked up on the internet; every punk rock clothing website has a bootleg of mine. Everyone. Bad Religion's using that boot photo (the cover of *'80-'85*). I'm not happy with them one iota. It was okay for an album cover, but it's a T-shirt in Hot Topic and I'm going after them really soon. I don't really want to do that, but it's like, "Hey, this isn't cool." I couldn't find those negatives. I had an original 16" X 20" fiber-based paper print, which is worth more than five hundred bucks to me. That didn't come back and I didn't get any photo credit in the album. There were all these photos, including the Jimi Hendrix at 11 PM and Bad Religion at 10 PM set list thing inside there, and all of those pictures are all mine.

Todd: How do you feel about—*Razorcake*'s guilty of it because we get photos from the bands sometimes, not directly from the photographers. Circle One, we did a two-part interview with Mike Vallejo, and we…

Edward: My pictures?

Todd: Yeah. But we gave you credit.

Edward: That's fine. Destroy All Music record shop ran one of my photos of Darby (Crash) in an ad. "Hey, you clowns. You know who took the picture. Just stick my name on it. And I even told them, "If you want to run a monthly different ad with some of my photos, fine. Just put my name on it. Don't steal it. That just burns me up.

Todd: The thing *Razorcake* runs into, especially with older bands, they'll have a scrap book. And then I'll have to ask, "Who's in the picture? Where was it taken? When was it taken? Who took it?"

Edward: And half the time they don't remember. Some of that stuff's expected. It's just sloppy.

Todd: You've been interviewed several times on film, and for retrospective punk books. Were you happy about the process, the results?

Tony: I talked to Blush for his book and I also talked to him and Paul in the movie, but what they used of my conversation was microseconds. Just a couple sentences.

Edward: They said, "I want to interview you for my book." And they spent two hours with me and they pulled one lame blurb about death rock. It's like, "That's not interviewing me. You're looking for a quote." Why don't you call it what it is? I was annoyed. I thought, "There's going to be a chapter on me at this rate." I said relevant stuff.

Tony: When people interview you for movies and books—and here's the problem that I have—they've got a thesis when they go in. They may say that they're being journalists, but they've got a thesis and a point of view, and if you say what falls into their point of view, then they'll use it.

Edward: In the movie, they wanted me to talk about the cops. And that's the only thing that made it in the movie. It was weird.

Todd: How many solo art shows have you had?

Edward: Approximately thirty. I don't pursue 'em. I've done some at friends' galleries, restaurants, stuff like that. I've never done slides of my work. I don't send them out to galleries. I figure if my stuff's good enough, it'll get there one way or another, eventually. I would think having the book out, I would have gotten more reactions. It's kind of interesting because I was totally hidden out underground for years and just kept doing my work and not doing anything with it, per se. I always thought, "Everybody remembers who took these." No. People remember the photos. They don't remember I took them, I've found out. When people see that, they go, "Oh, you did this and that and that and that?" But they've forgotten it. It's kind of strange. I didn't think that people would necessarily forget.

Todd: I think it also has to deal with—talking about Green Day and "The Day That Punk Broke"—there's an amazing amount of amnesia, either a.) they're ignorant of the past or b.) they're like, "It's so much more convenient for us to start from here on out because we can control it more."… You're doing a four-volume set of books, is that correct?

Edward: No. Thanks to Cal State Fullerton. I guess I'm lucky. Through that institution I got the book published. I never shopped my book around. This woman, Andrea Harris, was in charge of all that. Originally, I wanted to do a four-volume set. That got axed immediately. Way later, I'm talking to the publisher. He never even heard about it. We were butting heads along the line. It came out and I was happy with it. Andrea seemed like this really intelligent art-monster mom and I thought, "My book will happen if I deal with her." I mocked it up years ago and had it floating around, using it as a portfolio. We were butting heads like crazy. I was trying to change the last two pages out of there and she wouldn't let me do it. I held a bunch of stuff out of the book. I'll be damned if you're going to cherry pick all my good stuff and throw it in one book. That's why I ended up putting "Look for volume two" in the back of the book. I didn't want to do a volume two that looked like outtakes out of volume one. I have an American flag that's two by three feet flag, hanging on a coat hanger with a clasp, that looks like a crusader's cape, and I wanted to close the book with that and she wouldn't let me. I was not happy. It's a good, strong piece that doesn't even need a title.

Todd: So, no TV for the past twenty years?

Edward: I stopped watching television—the one reason that I cite was the fact that

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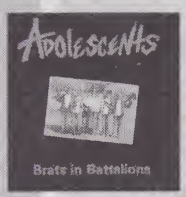

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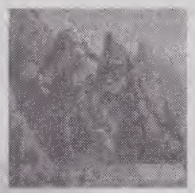

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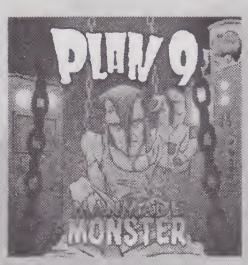

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they started using "Heard It through the Grapevine" in a commercial and I just shut my television off. You're not going to mess with my sentimentality or the music I grew up enjoying and I'm not going to think of a hamburger when I hear some song I grew up liking. I just bought out right then. I'm so glad I did it. I was in a market and I heard T. Rex come on in a commercial and I went running out of there. I think the only thing cool about all that junk where these bands are cashing in on that is the fact that Iggy's making some money off of it. I've got no problem with that. More power to you, buddy. You deserve it. But the rest of it, it's so obnoxious. It's just so bad. I was never that big a fan of television anyway. You know what? I'd rather live my own life. Seriously. I talked to this guy. He was twenty-six. He figured he'd watched 26,000 hours of television in his lifetime and I looked at him and said, "That's a lifetime." I'd rather live my own life instead of vicariously. I'll watch movies sometimes.

Todd: Do you see how your art has shaped your life? From purely a fan perspective, from seeing your photography for almost twenty years, and seeing it some of it collected in this book, does it give you a sense of focus, sense of accomplishment? You've been at it for such a long time.

Edward: I live it. It's a twenty-four hour day job being me, I think. All I'm concerned with is stuff I deem noteworthy or interesting. I've kind of had tunnel vision for my interests forever. When I was in school, "Algebra? You're full of baloney if you think that's going to affect my life. I don't want to hear about it." I was just like that. I never studied art history, but the art that I like, I paid real close attention to my whole life and learned about that stuff and was really influenced by it.

Todd: I'm a full believer in building your own bubble. As much as you can—you have to pay your bills and you have societal obligations—but at the end of the day, I want to create a small world that I can live in. Your house is literally flanked by two stucco condo houses and people on cell phones yelling at each other.

Edward: My houses have always been like this. Back in '80 or something, I was living in this environment of Stickley furniture and listening to Stockhausen and Eric Satee and stuff like that and going to punk shows every night. TSOL, those guys, they'd come over and get pictures. They probably thought it was going to be some place with posters all over the place.

Todd: Spray paint. Hole knocked in the wall.

Edward: And I was making flower arrangements. I didn't see any dichotomy to it all: stuff I like.

Tony: You're right. If you step outside, I saw a guy flip a cigarette over the wall. That's what's outside.

Edward: I think, in a lot of ways, politically and socially, we are powerless, but I kind of try to do my part to make people think about stuff. Corporations have taken over everything. Lobbyists should all be dead on the street. There should be no such thing as a lobbyist. Whatever they're lobbying for is some special

BAD BRAINS

I WAS ALWAYS BROKE, livin' at home. I had money for gas, film, and coffee and that was about it.

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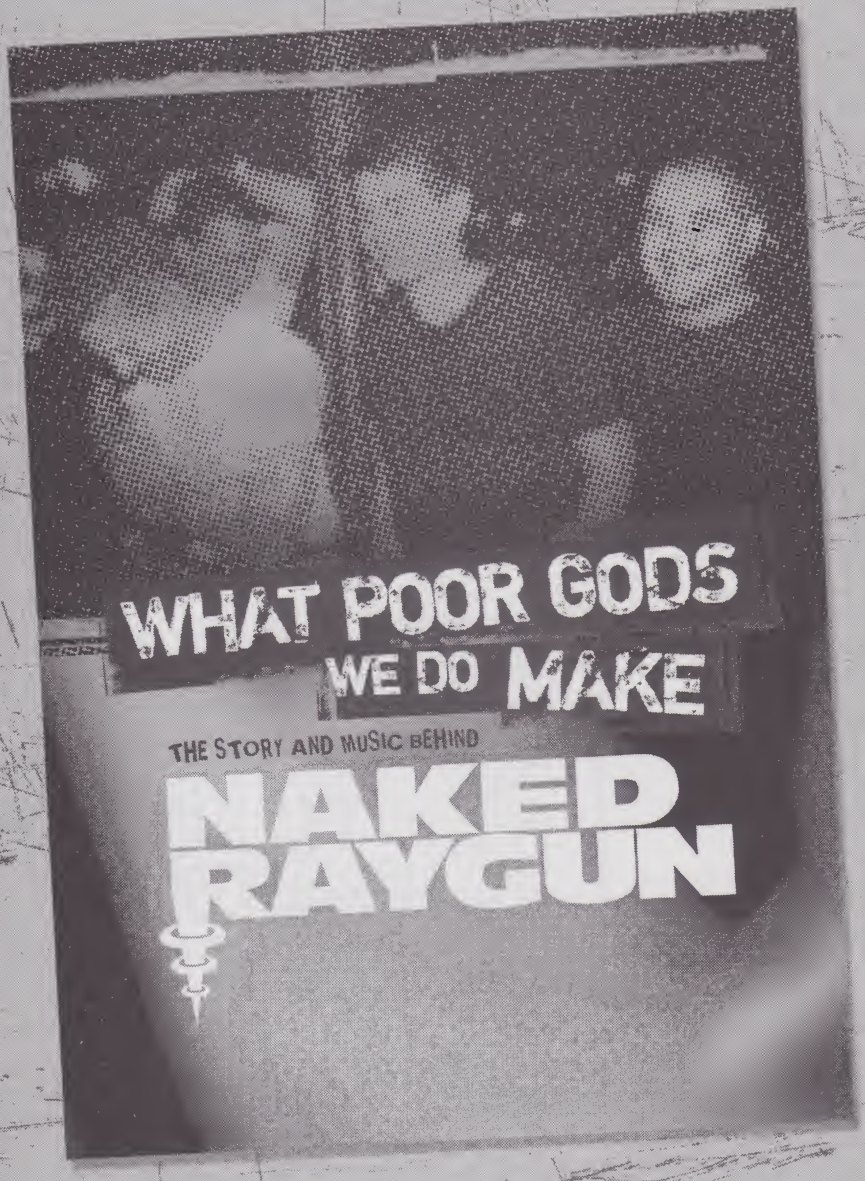

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interest thing. If it's just and good, it should float to the surface. It shouldn't need people in there with money and manipulation. Politicians should be doing it and they're not at all. Our government got bought out a long time ago. It's taken people forever to wake up. Now it's a little bit late.

Tony: I think Edward was one of the first people to alert me to what was happening and how things were being purchased on a massive scale. It wasn't something I noticed until ten, twelve years ago when I really first started to take a look at how much things had changed. Edward always had a way of not stating an opinion but asking a question which begged an answer that wasn't there.

Edward: I've always thought that being a good person is the right thing to do, not living in fear of some fictitious hell to be good. You should do that because what's right. I don't think I've gotten too many people mad at me.

Todd: Tell us a little about Stickley furniture. I want to show to people who are reading this that all of this stuff—no matter how far afield it may seem—can be integrated.

I DIDN'T GET MONEY for the punk stuff, so I got some goofy-assed jobs.

Edward: Stickley furniture, since my father was a forest ranger and I was little art monster, I was always interested in woodworking and when I saw my first Stickley chair—that's actually out there in the living room—I was like, "Wow. This is amazing," because the legs come up through the arms and it was dowelled and stuff. "I couldn't do this. This is beautiful." I had it for a year before I found out what the signature even meant, because I was collecting this stuff six years before there was any documentation on this furniture at all. It was lost and forgotten. And when I started collecting antiques, I started collections with a preface of art. I started collecting art pottery, arts and crafts stuff—which Stickley is—art deco, and art nouveau. And awhile later, I started selling all the deco and nouveau and just going with this particular genre of stuff. The arts and crafts movement was sort of retaliation against industrialization in the late 1800s. It was art for everyday use; form follows function. In a way, it has an attitude to it, too. There was the Victorian junk and then there was this stuff. This stuff will be around long after I'm dead. One hundred years old already.

Tony: It's totally solid.

Todd: Well made, simple lines.

Edward: I've been saying it for eighteen years; corporations should be forced to close down and sued for wasting natural resources—just flat-out sued for it, because they're making a landfill of trash. I have an antique fan that was my grandfather's and I literally ran it everyday, daytime—nighttime if I was home—for thirty years, and I shut it off and it turns for fifty-three seconds before it stops. And it's run for thousands and thousands of hours and that's how good it is. If you pay five hundred dollars for that, that's a better deal than paying thirty-nine dollars for one every season, because they break. This thing is three generations old already. Everything was made better. I hate new junk. It's all trash. Yeah, so that furniture, avant-garde classical music, and all that punk rock all relate, in my opinion.

Todd: What aspects of the American Dream have you seen die?

Edward: All of it: suburbia, quality of life ,infrastructure's falling apart. They're finally talking about that. That's been going on forever. They have all these grandiose ideas and they build all this stuff and plan all these plans, and you go look at it a year later, the plants are all dead, nobody maintains it, and it's gone. It's weird. Why bother?

Todd: I think so many things are coming to roost simultaneously. Healthcare has been crumbing for awhile. You can't underestimate the detrimental effect of gas prices doubling in two years.

Edward: I can remember gas when it was eleven cents a gallon. I remember, in the mid-'60s, it was twenty-one cents a gallon. What a weird thought. It's not even money, almost.

Todd: Housing is so expensive. California—Los Angeles, in particular—seems to be a Petri dish of how America's infrastructure is showing its cracks.

Edward: The Inland Empire is all falling apart, big time. The housing market's gone to crud. Who wants to live there anyway? If it wasn't for welfare and meth, it wouldn't exist. I haven't been in San Bernardino since the early '70s. Sheesh.

Tony: When you did that Dr. Strange book signing, I went up that 210 Freeway. "Hey, that wasn't there ten, fifteen years ago." Where did this new Los Angeles come from?

Edward: When I was a kid, I remember talking about, "One of these days, L.A. and San Bernardino will touch." And they already have. All these areas where I haven't been in years and I do not want to see the way they've been destroyed. You know that song, "This Could Be Anywhere" by the Kennedys, that's such a great song. It's so spot on.

Todd: Whenever I drive through those areas, I think of bombers from World War II, except they're dropping these pre-fab houses, so tightly clustered together; destroying the land in a different way.

Edward: You can run across the roofs in the whole complex. When I was working in Freightliner in the late '70s, a friend of mine who was living in Alta Loma told me they built 90,000 houses in one year out there.

Tony: And no matter what you do, it's still Alta Loma. A Home Depot there, a Wal Mart there. It looks like everything else.

Edward: Starbucks, Burger King. Mc Donald's. What else do you need? Shop what mom and pop? They're gone. We saw it happen in ten years. It's disgusting.

Tony: I'm seeing that in Pasadena, Rick's Burgers, have been looking for awhile to set up.

Todd: Home of the Spuderito.

Tony: The French fry burrito. It's the best. Been there since '64.

Todd: Because condos went up right next door.

Tony: I hated seeing Poo Bah Records in Pasadena leave that spot. It was a drag to see Tower Records go out of business, but it was worse to see Poo Bah get moved. They used to have your photos up at Poo Bah. "You could probably fetch $100 each for those on Ebay," I told them. "These pictures go up in museums. Those that you have are about as authentic as you can get. I think I'd have 'em up better than with Scotch tape and staples. I'd probably frame them myself. Edward Colver. Look him up. Good seeing you guys again. Love your store. Always have." Then split. The next time I went back, they'd taken that stuff down. The sale of those photos might help keep the store open for a couple more years.

Todd: The old Poo Bah location is now a yarn store… So, when did you start realizing that you could support yourself with the arts?

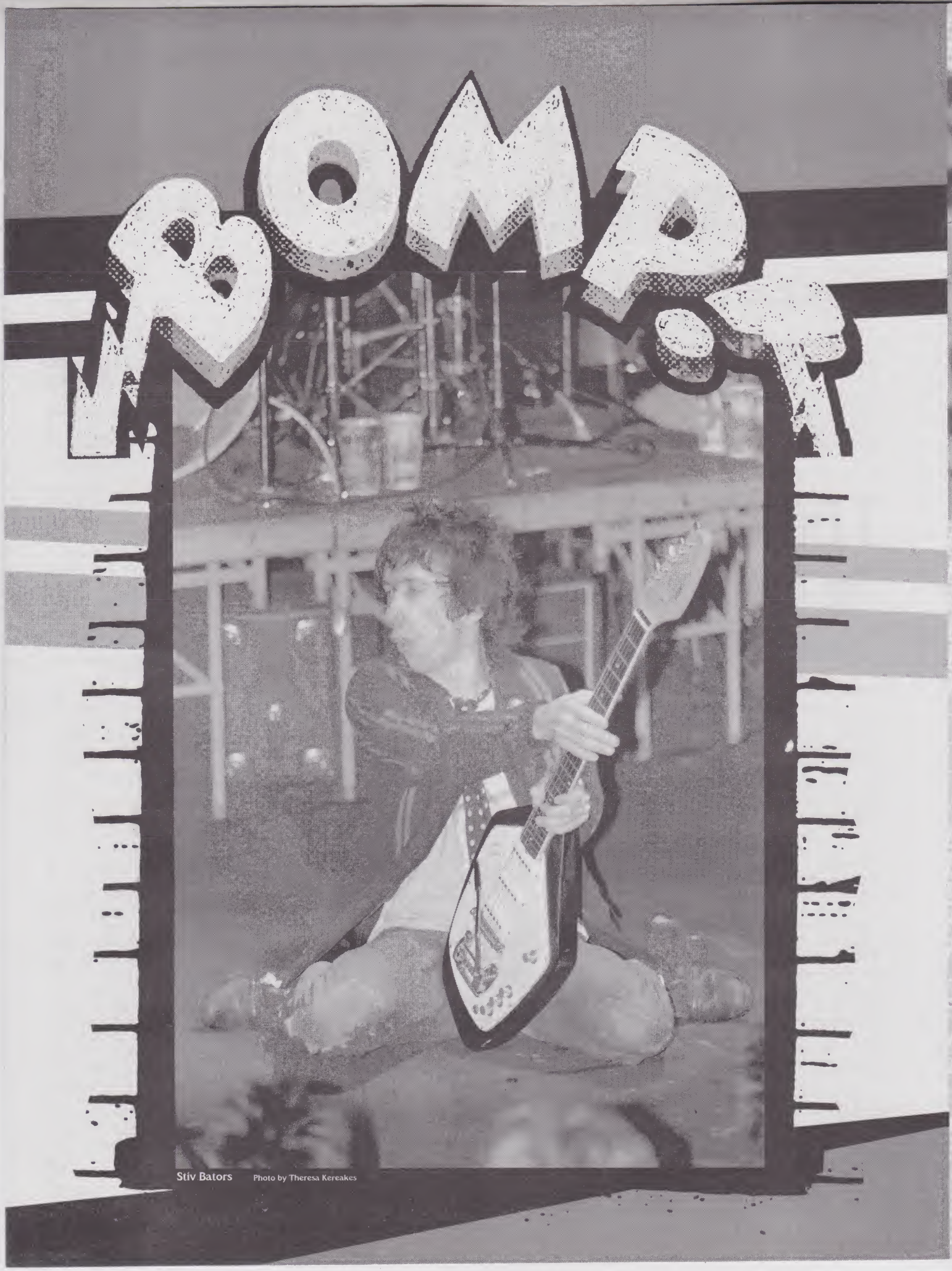
Edward: I'm still waiting for it. [laughs] Actually, I haven't punched a time clock in twenty-two, twenty-three years, proud to say. But, hopefully, doing these T-shirts, maybe I'll make some money off of this stuff. I've said it for a long time, if I try to exploit what I've already created in my life with my sculpture and photos, I should be able to support myself the rest of my life… not that I'm going to stop doing stuff.

Tony: He has collector-itis, too. He has stuff that would probably make a house payment. But collectors don't let go of stuff.

Edward: Like that green vase right there, I could make a mortgage payment for three months with that.

Tony: But then it wouldn't be there.

Edward: Yep. That's right. Oh, I have a pair of Frank Lloyd Wright candle sticks I bought on aesthetic appeal in the early '70s for twenty-five dollars and my old girlfriend's like, "Why don't you sell those?" "Because I'll never get another pair." Money's way all-too-fired important, but I'm a collector. Money's around the corner. You get it. It's everywhere, in a way. Not that I'm rich at all or anything. Some of this stuff is irreplaceably rare.



Stiv Bators Photo by Theresa Kereakes

Introduction

by Namella J. Kim Layout by Dave Disorder

Interview by Namella J. Kim and Todd Taylor

I'm rarely enticed to write these days. It's probably an evil concoction of a profound, deep, near mid-life depression and sheer lack of interest in what's going on these days. You can't really blame me for this as I am utterly disgusted by the current music scene. I grew up listening to so many bands I would do absolutely anything for, now it just seems like the latest offerings are a contrived bastardization of my childhood heroes—bred for mass consumption. Sigh. Don't get me wrong, I have heard a small handful of artists who wear their hearts on their tattered sleeves and pour their soul out on their recordings and performances... However, then we witness the success of the Jonas Brothers (fake tweeny-pop rendition of already shitty band, The Vines), Amy Winehouse (cracked out, fake Rachel Nagy of Detroit Cobras), The Shout Out Louds (fake Robert Smith/ The Cure, actually they did a damned good job of it!), and a long, ever changing, trendoid list of DJ's and bands championed by skank-hipster magazines like *BPM*, *Urb*, *Filter*, *Vice*, etc. Do you guys see the same dung heap I am seeing these days? Argh.

Despite my apathetic attitude, when Todd Taylor asked me if I wanted to talk to Bomp! Records to celebrate the release of their retrospective coffee table book, I went to work. It was a battle cry, a kick in the pants! I needed to show people that good music is not extinct; it's just hidden from plain view by large plastic aviator sunglasses bought at Kitson. Chances are, if you like the current wave of bands, you should dig deeper and go to the source. Then you have to go left of center from there, down a rabbit hole to a fairytale land and there you will find Bomp! Records—uncompromising, thoughtful, and innovative in every way.

Picture the halcyon days of 1966 San Francisco, a mimeographed copy of a homemade music pamphlet called *Mojo Navigator* makes the rounds on the streets of free love. This homegrown zine becomes the model for another zine that would go on to become *Rolling Stone*. Who was the mastermind behind such an influential publication? A true music fan, scene impresario, and D.I.Y. rock scribe named Greg Shaw—Bomp! Records founder.

Cut to Los Angeles in the mid-'70s. Bomp! Records began as a necessary offshoot to the successor of *Mojo Navigator*, entitled *Who Put the Bomp?* When The Flamin' Groovies recorded a brilliant album with Dave Edmunds and could not get any label interest, they went to Greg to ask him to put it out. Greg was then busy being at the helm of his zine, working at *Phonograph Record Magazine*, and compiling tracks for United Artists Records' reissues. He had no fears and no expectations... and he went ahead and released it. Bomp! Records was born.

Bomp! Records made several scenes possible during a time when there was nothing but major labels (Greg muses that Casablanca Records was as close as it got!): punk, powerpop, garage punk, garage revival, gothic, psychobilly, new wave, and psychedelic all crawled out of the dank underground clubs and into record collections thanks to Bomp! and its sister label, Voxx. Artists such as Iggy Pop (his first solo offering and early recordings), The Dead Boys and Stiv Bators solo, The Heartbreakers, The Germs, The Weirdos, The Zeros, The Gravedigger V, The Pandoras, Shoes, The Plimsouls, The Romantics, Nikki Corvette, The Lyres, The Chesterfield Kings, Brian Jonestown Massacre, Spacemen 3, The Dwarves, The Black Lips, and many more. There was also the Pebbles collection of '60s garage punk unknowns, personally compiled by Greg. It went on to influence the Nuggets box set, The Cramps and a bunch of garage bands with great cover material!

Greg suddenly passed away in October 2004. He was only fifty-five years old. I knew him briefly as a close friend and mentor months prior to his death. He believed in me and gave me great encouragement and practical wisdom. It was a pleasure to have his company during lazy afternoons when we would go to Roebeks Juice in Los Feliz to talk about bands and life. I really looked up to him and he treated me like an equal—never being an asshole or a condescending jerk. I miss him very much.

Behind the scenes throughout the chaos and success from the very beginning was Greg's partner and first wife, Suzy Shaw. She is the head of daily operations for the label and its collectors' mail order business, as she continues the tradition of Bomp! Records to this day. Suzy, along with esteemed rock renaissance man, Mick Farren, decided to honor Greg with a book worthy of his forty-plus years of unabashed rock'n'roll dedication. *Bomp! Records: Saving the World One Record at a Time* (AMMO Publications) can be found at your local bookstore or by direct mail order at www.bomp.com. It features the definitive collection of all that is Bomp!, along with contributions from Lester Bangs, Greil Marcus, Ken Barnes, Gene Sculatti, Lenny Kaye, Peter Case, and Mike Stax (of *Ugly Things*, an awesome zine to check out.)

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Namella: Hi Suzy. Thank you for taking the time to conduct this interview with me. I know this is coming at the eve of your book signing at La Luz de Jesus tomorrow, (January 19, 2008) so I really appreciate you taking time out for me. Where are you from?

Suzy: I was born in a little farm town in Illinois on the Iowa border.

Namella: Can you tell me a bit about your childhood and how you came into the rock'n'roll world?

Suzy: Actually, I think my Midwestern work ethic has been a huge help to Bomp! I love to work, I never sleep past 5 AM, never have, can't wait to get up and start working! My official entry into the business world of rock'n'roll began the day I met Greg (Shaw).

Namella: How did you meet Greg?

Suzy: Total chance. I was a runaway in Haight-Ashbury (San Francisco) and he offered me a place to stay. I think I was helping out with *Mojo Navigator* (Greg's first zine) about an hour later. He knew a good business partner when he saw one, even though we were both just seventeen years old.

Namella: *Mojo Navigator* is cited as an early inspiration for *Rolling Stone* magazine. I totally think Jann Wenner jacked you guys.

Suzy: Jann and Greg were very much rivals in the '60s, but I talked to Jann about the book when we were putting it together and he was very kind and generous and let me use the *Rolling Stone* photos in the book at no charge. He also told me that the book brought back a lot of nice memories. The passage of time has done much to eradicate old squabbles, which weren't really as serious as they seemed back then.

Suzy Shaw, 1974

When we started out "in the business," there was no business!

Todd: Pardon my ignorance, but what's "The Bomp"?

Namella: I think the name comes from the Barry Mann doo wop classic, "Who Put the Bomp?"

Suzy: It's just some lyrics from a song: "Who put the bomp in the bomp-sha-bomp-sha-bomp, who put the ram in the rama-lama-ding dong?" Greg actually had hundreds of zines. The first issue of *Bomp* was actually called *Duke of Earl*, named after another song that he liked. But the name *Who Put the Bomp* stuck, and then it was shortened to *Bomp*. We interviewed Barry Mann for the book. He was pleased that we used the name.

Namella: *Bomp* magazine featured some of the earliest writings of the preeminent rock journalists of our time. Did you know then that they would become such icons in their field?

Suzy: Greg always seemed to be very aware of the historical impact of everything he was doing; he was probably a lot more cognitive of that than I was, me being more occupied with the day to day business. I certainly knew they were talented, but back then talent wasn't so unusual. People who wrote for a living were rather expected to be able to write, and to have something to say. This is far from the case today.

Todd: What writer did you personally go, "Wow. That's really great writing?"

Suzy: Different writers impressed me for different reasons. Ken Barnes and Greil Marcus were great historians. Mark Shipper and Lester were hilariously funny. I still have a good laugh remembering some of the stuff Shipper wrote; nobody could beat Shipper for satire. I got along well with all the writers. They were smart, interesting, funny people and I respected them. The rock writers of the time were—generally—extremely well educated and were aiming at a very high level of journalism.

Namella: Mick Farren of The Deviants on Sire and Stiff Records U.K. and Pink Fairies with Twink, ex-Pretty Things; author of many books on rock'n'roll (Elvis, Gene Vincent, Rolling Stones, etc.) and science fiction (DNA Cowboys trilogy, The Feelies), anarchist, revolutionary, rock'n'roll philosopher, former *NME* writer and current *Los Angeles City Beat* columnist, is quite a prolific writer as well as a counter-cultural music legend. What was it like working together with him on *Saving the World One Record at a Time*?

Suzy: 'Mick is brilliant. We love him. We were friends already and he was an obvious choice for editor.

Todd: How did you first meet Mick?

Suzy: I've known Mick for years. Patrick put out some of his material on Alive, and when

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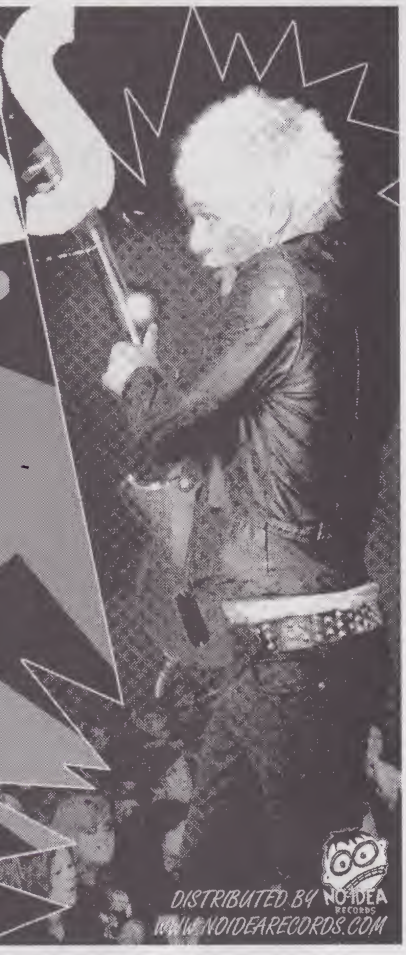

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BARRACUDA SOUND

Photo by Richard Creamer

Iggy Pop in a headlock by joking, fellow Stooge, Ron Asheton.

we were getting the book together, Patrick suggested using him, as Mick had a lot of book experience and was not emotionally involved with the material.

Todd: What was his "job" for the book, being co-editor?

Suzy: We needed somebody who could give the book a wider perspective than just the "garage" angle, and he did a perfect job. Mick was the mastermind. My name is on the book because the publishers wanted it there, not because I was the main contributor. The book was my idea, but Mick and the art directors made it happen... I did write some stories in the book, of course, at Mick's request!

The book would not have been what it is without Mick Farren. His experience and expertise was invaluable, and his choice of material was superb. He guided the book every step of the way. And the art directors (Smog Design) did such an amazing job, giving the book the charm and character that make it so unique. I still marvel at their work every time I pick up the book. They spent months here going through the archives, and it's their work that makes the book so visually interesting and appealing. I can't thank Mick and the Smog Design team enough, and the publishers (Ammo) went out on a bit of a limb for us too, not being entirely sure of the sales value, but knowing that the book was something of great historical value and interest. The book was on the *L.A. Times* bestseller list recently, so I hope their faith is being rewarded.

Namella: I always found you to be the most approachable of all the female faces in the garage rock scene. Are you still in contact with some of the ladies in the business?

Suzy: When we started out "in the business," there was no business! We invented it as we went, starting out with the fanzine and then adding the mail order, the labels, the store, the distribution. We never looked to anyone for ideas, no classes were taken, no books were read. Not out of arrogance; we just preferred to make up our own rules as we went along, for right or wrong.

Namella: You have survived in a field that's—quite frankly—select and inhospitable to those who are mature, at times. What gets you through those rough times when you're in doubt?

Suzy: I haven't encountered any problems of that sort, as we operate entirely independently. If I had to get a job at Warner Music Group, it might be an issue, but I don't. And yeah, a lot of people are having a hard time in the record biz. But if one thing isn't working, we simply do something else. It's a case of survival of the fittest; those who don't adapt will die, as simple as that. It's all about coming up with new ideas, and that's the fun of it, I think. Business can be boring, but trust me; the record business is a new adventure every day. It's a real life video game, and I don't mind playing it at all. Of course, it can be exhausting and frustrating, but then you win a round and it's all worthwhile. There's nothing in life like the pleasure of something that you did yourself, and did well. Actually I'd like to quote Greg here in an excerpt from the book:

> *"We're still here, doing what we want, on our own terms, answering to nobody, dealing with people in an old fashioned mom and pop kind of way. It's a satisfying life that we'd never trade for, say, David Geffen's. A small business can be the means to "find yourself" more surely than any mystical path. If nothing else, maybe we've set an example that might offer an alternative to this increasing corporate, impersonal society. Or maybe not. At least we've had a good time trying... and we're not done yet."*

We just preferred to make up our own rules as we went along.

Stiv Bators and Greg Shaw

Well said, Greg! I like to read that every now and again; I find it spot on and very inspiring.

Todd: Have you "found yourself" by doing the business-side of a business, and if so, what did you find?

Suzy: Oh yeah, there I am, in the warehouse, packing records! Seriously, I'm not inclined to such introspection, but I have had a really good time doing what I do.

Namella: Long Gone John was said to be selling his label (Sympathy For The Record Industry). He named his price at $675,000. Serious inquiries only. The industry has changed so much in the past few years and it seems like a smart business decision from his vantage point. Could you put a price on Bomp! Have you thought about selling?

Suzy: I don't think Bomp! is transferable. I would no more sell Bomp! than my cat, or a

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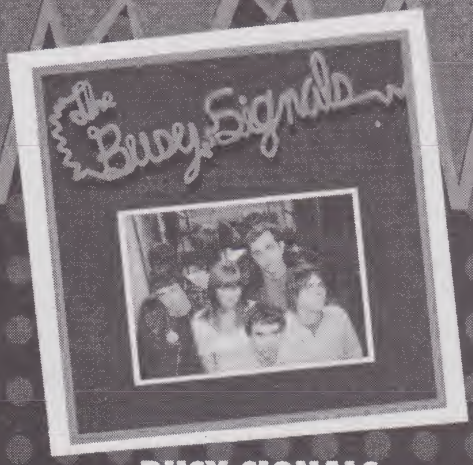
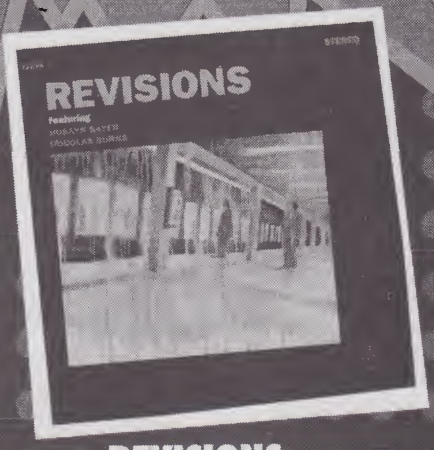
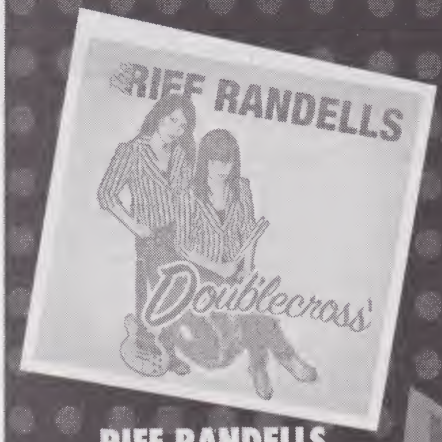


BUSY SIGNALS
LP/CD



REVISIONS
revised observations
LP/CD
(members of observers and dorox girls)



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Greg and Suzy Shaw at CBGB's

It's a case of survival of the fittest; those who don't adapt will die, as simple as that.

kidney. I don't see Bomp! as a money thing, it's a historical archive and if it makes a little money, great, if it doesn't, mailorder can pay the bills. It always has, anyway. That and Patrick Boissel's label, Alive, which, in fact, is what has kept Bomp! going for a long time. Bomp! is not signing new bands. The label was Greg's artistic vision and I intend to keep it that way.

Todd: How do you feel about the state of garage rock these days—the music, not the business end?

Suzy: I think there's a potential revolution going on. In the last couple of years we've noticed a huge new wave of garage bands putting out their own records. Every few years, you get a new scene going on: punk, garage, or whatever. It's a lot better than it was ten years ago. That's for sure.

Namella: I mean with the advent of digital downloading and a shortage of decent bands to put out, how has Bomp! endured and evolved to meet the demands of this new generation of music fans?

Suzy: The usual answer is that digital downloading has impacted business tremendously and that big business has turned everything into a huge pile of crap. That is absolutely true, I can't disagree. But it's also true that this has caused a backlash leading to some very interesting innovations and unusual creativity. Labels have to come up with some very interesting ideas—I got a CD in for mailorder the other day that was packaged inside a hollowed-out rock! You can't download that, kids! Specialized packaging is one way to go. We're doing a lot more limited edition autographed copies, color vinyl, etcetera. Record collectors are a specialized breed and they will be here as long as I will be; they aren't going anywhere. They will not wake up tomorrow and stop collecting. As long as we can figure out what they want, Bomp! and Alive will survive.

Namella: Who are some of your favorite bands at the moment?

Suzy: It's going to be hard to answer that without looking like I'm plugging our label, Alive, but, for real, I like a lot of stuff that Patrick puts out. When Ryan—my assistant—and I are putting on the tunes for the day, we have nearly all Alive artists on the turntable: Radio Moscow, Brimstone Howl, Black Diamond Heavies, SSM, Thomas Function, Ron Franklin. We alternate those with Hendrix, the Kinks, and the Stones mostly.

Todd: What's different about the bands on Alive from the rest of the bands around today? Is it that you treat them like family, get to know the bands, that the music that Alive releases becomes more special?

Suzy: Some of the bands on Alive are a lot more roots-oriented than anything Greg would have done on Bomp!, but I'm always amazed at the number of customers who will order the Crawdaddys *and* the Black Keys, or one of the other Alive bands. Bomp! and Alive and both just good rock'n'roll; all part of the same family.

Namella: Greg's passing came as a shock to the world. It was just so sudden and he was too young to go. Do you feel his presence around you and the label?

Suzy: I guess the world was shocked, but I wasn't. It was far from sudden. He was a diabetic who didn't take care of himself and was seriously ill for a long, long time. It was very tragic, of course; a great loss seeing him get sicker and sicker, but it was his own doing. He could have been alive today if he hadn't been doing the things he was doing—drugs and alcohol. But I am very aware of my continuing job of making Greg's work available for historians and consumers. The book is one example of that. It will probably be required reading in music history classes fifty years from now. It's a fascinating document of how things were done in times gone by, extending far beyond just Bomp!.

Namella: What's next for you and Bomp?

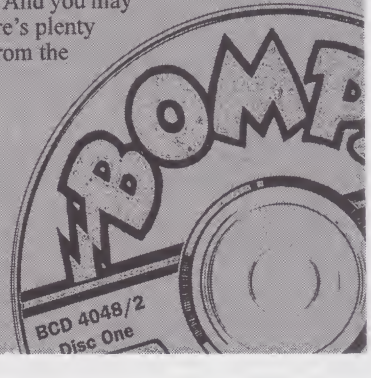
Suzy: Nothing has changed. We'll keep doing the mailorder, Patrick will continue making great rock'n'roll with his label, and who knows what we'll come up with next? We're kicking around an idea for an online Bomp! magazine.

Namella: In my early days working with Lee at Dionysus Records, I recall Christmas time being extra special because you would send those mouthwatering boxes of cookies. Not many know that you're an awesome chef. Can you share a simple recipe for the epicurean Razorcake readers out there?

Suzy: The full story of the Bomp! cookies and why I started making them is in the Bomp! book.

Namella: (She later promised to send me her famous lemon bar recipe.) Any other thoughts you would like to share with our readers?

Suzy: Yes, I want to convey my deepest gratitude to everyone who has allowed us, and those like us, to stay in business all these years by searching out something a little different than what is offered by the mainstream. Thanks from the bottom of my heart to all of you. I never for a moment forget that it's you guys who allow all of us indies to be here at all. And you may be sure that there's plenty more to come from the Bomp! family.



TOP FIVES

RAZORCAKE STAFF

Adrian Salas

Songs That Make Me Want to Learn Twangy Guitar
• "Chicken Squawk," MDC
• "Look at the Rain," Meat Puppets
• "Keep on Hoppin,'" Mekons
• "Border Ska," Camper Van Beethoven
• The entirety of The Gun Club's *Fire of Love* album.

Amy Adoyzie

Top 5 Things Not to Be Take for Granted
• China Loca's Thumbs Up Tour
• First world amenities like clean water and clothes dryers
• Knowing where to go, when to stay, and who to stick around
• Goodnight Loving, Japanther, Mr. Cartwright
• *Avow* #22

Art Ettinger

• Traditionals, *Generation of Today* CD
• Paint It Black, *New Lexicon* LP
• Brain Handle, Self-titled LP
• Crap Corps, Self-titled 7"
• Rot Shit, *Have You Scene Rot Shit?* 7"

Ben Snakepit

1. Land Action, Spanish Lisp 7"
2. The Young, Demo CDR
3. Tim Version, *Decline of the Southern Gentleman* CD
4. Blotto, *Remember Buy the Vinyl First* CD
5. Chinese Telephones, Self-titled CD

Bradley Williams

Top 5 People, Things, and Visions That Keep My Head Held High
1. China Loca (Amy The Zilla, and Gusley The Scary Man)
2. Addy Banks (the one the only Abbaphone documentarian of Punk House!)
3. Drunk people singing to dogs in the past-midnight hours
4. Long Lost Phone Numbers
5. *The War Eagle Reader* (Jeremy Dale Henderson!)

Buttertooth

1. Turbo Fruits, Self-titled CD (Ecstatic Peace)
2. Circle Jerks and Hit Me Back, live at HOB, San Diego (the security sucked and the kids broke barricades and stage dove. Keith Morris railed on everything!)
3. Trans Am, S*ex Change* CD
4. Weird War, *Illuminated by the Light* CD (Drag City)
5. Ted Leo And The Pharmacists, *Living with the Living* CD (Touch and Go)

Chris Pepus

• Congressman John Conyers's investigations of the Bush administration
• KDHX's Monday night punk shows: *Scene of the Crime* and *The Super Fun Happy Hour* (radio programs)
• *The Oozing Skull* (DVD with comments by former *Mystery Science Theater 3000* cast members)
• *Killer of Sheep* (film)
• Crag Unger, *Fall of the House of Bush* (book)

Constantine Koutsoutis

Top 5 Reasons to Stay up to 4 AM
1. Pig Destroyer, *Phantom Limb* CD
2. Rob Sheffield, *Love Is a Mix Tape* (book)
3. A crate of Yeungling in the boiler room
4. www.io9.com, the best sci-fi blog ever
5. Armalite, Self-titled CD

Craven Rock

(Counting Down to 1)
5. Tatiana (that tiger that mauled its oppressors in San Francisco)
4. Drive-By Truckers, "The Righteous Path" (song)
3. John Fogerty, *Revival* CD
2. *Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten* (movie)
1. Joe Strummer (the man, his life, and philosophy)

Cristy C. Road

Top Five Records to Drink Yourself to Death Because I Hate Winter
1. DRI, *Crossover*
2. The Doors, *Best of*
3. Nile, *Black Seeds of Vengeance*
4. What Happens Next, *Stand Fast Armageddon Justice Fighter*
5. Tom Waits, *Blue Valentine*

Daryl Gussin

• Songs For Moms, *The Worse It Gets the Better* LP
• Tim Version, *Decline of the Southern Gentlemen* LP
• Crossed Eyes, *Rattled* 7"
• Firestarter, *Livin' On the Heat* CD
• The new 21 inches of Onion Flavored Rings songs.

Designated Dale

Three Recent 7-Inchers and Two Other Reasons to Celebrate the Rock That Is Off With Their Heads (Thanks Again to Todd for My B-Day Stash!)
• *"One For The Road"* split 7" with Four Letter Word on No Idea. "Four the Four" makes me want to pogo so hard on the bed, I'm gonna go through the fuckin' ceiling.
• Split 7" with Dear Landlord on No Idea. If and when OWTH ever do some dates with Motörhead, Lemmy *has* to come out and sing back-ups on *"Shambles."* Fuck, yeah.
• Split 7" with The Measure [SA] on Chunksaah. If there was ever a different version of the Ramones' 1976 classic, *"I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend,"* this is it. Keep trying and failing miserably, the rest of you emo shitbirds.
• *All Things Move Toward Their End* compilation LP on No Idea. Possibly the perfect party platter, *pinche pendejo*.
• Any band that backs The Muffs (*especially* the Melanie & Chris era!) is A-O-fucking-K with me.

Donofthedead

• My wife buying me a new camera for X-mas!
• Utopia, Self-titled CD
• Sowa We Krwi, *Przebudzenie* CD
• OldHcDude & I's Photo Exhibit @ Cafe Kashmir
• Tecate

Jennifer Federico

Top 5 Shows from 2007
• Subhumans (UK) at Slim's
• Bad Brains at Slim's
• Pleasureboaters at Hemlock
• Arctic Monkeys at Warfield
• Extra Action Marching Band at 12 Galaxies

Jennifer Whiteford

Top 5 Things I Highly Enjoy That Are Not Really Punk Rock At All
1. *Blueprint Magazine* (it's published by Martha Stewart!)
2. The new Cat Power album.
3. Lorna Landvik's feel-good novels.
4. Watching *The Amazing Race* and discussing it with my mom.
5. Going to bed early.

Jenny Moncayo

1. *Death Proof* by Quentin Tarantino (movie)
2. Compilation, *Sh-Boom, Doo Wop Classics*
3. The Troggs, "I Can't Control Myself"
4. Receiving a season of *America's Funniest Home Videos* for my birthday.
5. Season 1 of *30 Rock* (TV)

Keep trying and failing miserably, the rest of you emo shitbirds.

Joe Evans III

• The Evaporators, *Gassy Jack and Other Tales* CD
• Prizzy Prizzy Please, Self-titled CD
• Love Songs, *Hot Buns (The Sequel to the Theme of the Sequel to Top Gun)* 7"
• Getting laid off
• Immediately interning at Whoa Oh records.

Josh Benke

• Eddie Ware, *Lima Beans* 7"
• Carbonas, Self-titled LP
• The Better Beatles, *Mercy Beat* LP
• Lonnie the Cat, I Ain't Drunk 7"
• George and Teddy and the Condors, *In Person from Ciro's Le Disc* LP

Keith Rosson

• Ringers, *Detention Halls*
• Banner Pilot, *Pass the Poison*
• Tiltwheel, *Hair-Brained Scheme Addicts*
• Pretty Boy Thorson & The Falling Angels, *Take It Easy*
• Mullett making a huge-ass banner with Gus and Amy's faces on it for the last China Loca show

Kurt Morris

1. Jawbreaker (everything)
2. Neurosis (everything)
3. Doing my taxes
4. *Welcome to Flavor Country* #13 (zine)
5. Coalesce (everything)

The Lord Kveldulfr

Five Records That Are as Fresh for Me Today as They Were Back in High School
• Soul Asylum, *Hang Time*
• Meatmen, *Rock 'N' Roll Juggernaut*
• SNFU, *If You Swear You'll Catch No Fish*
• Doughboys, *Whatever*
• Soulside, *Trigger*

Maddy Tight Pants

Best Records Right Now for a Punk Rock Dance Party!
1. Tranzmitors, Self-titled LP
2. Jay Reatard, *Blood Visions* LP
3. Barracudas, *Through the Mysts of Time* CD
4. Busy Signals, Self-titled LP
5. Onion Flavored Rings, *Used to It* LP (still!)

Megan Pants

Top Reasons I Need to Get off My Ass and Get a Record Player
• My record reviews are all sorts of backed up
• Tranzmitors LP
• "Hey, you wanna come over and listen to records?" pickup line deemed useless
• Only owning The Swingin' Medallions' "Double Shot (of My Baby's Love)" on a 45
• Sitting on the floor just looking through all my records just isn't all that fun

Mike Faloon

5 Great New Bands I Discovered During My Last Visit to Underground Medicine
1. Thee Almighty Handclaps
2. Boston Chinks
3. Cheap Time
4. Coconut Coolouts
5. Tuff Bananas

Mike Frame

• Lemuria, *Get Better* LP
• Drive By Truckers, *Creation's Dark* CD
• The Blessings, *Bare Bones* CD
• Hollywood Brats
• Boston, Self-titled CD

Mike Head

(A nice subscriber from the U.K. who sent in a hand-written list)
1. Lawrence Arms/Falcon/ Sundowner/American Steel shows
2. Against Me! live
3. Sundowner visiting the U.K.
4. *My Boring Ass Life*, Kevin Smith (book)
5. *The Future Is Unwritten* (the movie about Joe Strummer)

MP Johnson

• www.shocknife.com
• *Rambo* (movie)
• *Kite Runner* (The book. I'm not going to bother with the movie.)
• *King of Kong* (movie)
• M.I.A., *Kala*

Mr. Z

1. The Arrivals, *Marvels of Industry*
2. The Queers, *Munki Brain*
3. Shang-A-Lang, *Error: You Cannot Add Yourself as a Friend* EP
4. MIA, *Kala*
5. DJ Shadow & Cut Chemist, *The Hard Sell*

Nardwuar The Human Serviette

1. *Devil Born without Horns* by Michael A. Lucas (Amazing book by a Phantom Surfer!)
2. *Ugly Things* Magazine # 26 (Mike Stax's 'zine is absolute tops, year after year!)
3. Love, *Comes in Colours* CD (Dominic Priore's *Riot on Sunset Strip* book is still inspiring me six months after I bought it!)
4. Mr. Plow, *Apocalypse Plow* CD
5. Fuad and the Feztones, *Beeramid* CD (Bobby and John from The Gruesomes wicked Frat-rock dance party band!)

Nick Toerner

• The Copyrights, *Learn the Hard Way* CD
• Till Plains, *We Neither* CDEP
• The Arrivals, *Marvels of Industry* CD
• Ringers, *Curses* LP
• Brickfight, *Grown Ass Men*

Rev. Norb

• They Might Be Giants, *Here Come the 123's* CD/DVD
• Cute Lepers, *So Screwed Up* 45
• Nice Boys, *Very Mary* 45
• Archies, *The Complete Archie Show* DVD set
• Crime/Rock & Roll Adventure Kids/Top Ten, Live at Café du Nord, 2.22.08

Rhythm Chicken

• The Figgs, *Continue to Enjoy the Figgs* (live CDs, vol. 1 & 2). Best live rock'n'roll stuff I've heard in long long time.
• The Vulcaneers, *Beat Me Off Scotty!* LP
• Bill Cosby, *Hurray for the Salvation Army Band!* LP
• Brewcity Bruisers (Milwaukee Roller-Derby!)
• My dream movie which I hope will come out soon: *Jaws vs. The Planet of the Apes*!

Naked Rob (KSCU 103.3FM)

1. Grannies, *Incontinence: Outtakes & Demos 1999-2008* CD
2. The Juke Joint Pimps, *Boogie the House Down-Juke Joint Style* CD
3. Touch My Rash, *Doomed from the Start* CD
4. Brutal Knights, *Living by Yourself* 12"
5. Iron Lung, *Sexless//No Sex* CD

Ryan Leach

1. Wire: *154*
2. Television Personalities: *The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Dreaming*
3. Sparks: *Hello Young Lovers*
4. John Roller for sharing the Wall Of Voodoo love.
5. Black Randy: *Pass the Dust, I Think I'm Bowie*

Sarah Shay

1. The Loved Ones, *Build and Burn*
2. Chris Thile, "Set Me up with One of Your Friends" (song)
3. Mark Twain, "Punch, Brothers, Punch!" (short story)
4. The Can Kickers, *Dark Molly* 7"
5. Jason Webley, *Counterpoint*

Sean Koepenick

My Favorite John Fante Books
1. *The Road to Los Angeles*
2. *Ask the Dust*
3. *Full of Life*
4. *Dreams from Bunker Hill*
5. *Wait until Spring, Bandini*

Steve Larder

Top 5 UK Zines (Past and Present)
1. *Gadgie*
2. *Morgenmuffle*
3. *Jellybrain*
4. *Grinner*
5. *Last Hours*

Todd Taylor

• Cuntifiers, *Never Coming Out* CD-R
• The Tim Version, *Decline of the Southern Gentleman* LP
• Shorebirds, Self-titled 7"
• Dan Padilla / Tim Version / Hidden Spots / Tiltwheel, Split 7"
• Pine Hill Haints, *Ghost Dance* CD
• (tie) County Line Rd., *The Birth of Hank Malloy* 7" and Pretty Boy Thorson and the Fallen Angels, *Take It Easy* CD

Ty Stranglehold

Top Five "A" Bands
1. Adolescents
2. Angry Samoans
3. Agent Orange
4. AK-47
5. Alcoholic White Trash

Uri G.

1. Against Me!, live
2. ax84.com
3. Naked Mighty Mango juice
4. American Cockring, *12-13 Deep* LP
5. Fog Machine

Vincent Battilana

Top 5 Records I Still Can't Find
1. Shooting Fish In A Barrel Full Of Moneys, 1st 7", 2nd pressing (yellow labels, NOT GOLD)
2. Fishstick Kitties, *Midnite Alleys* 7", any pressing
3. Shark Jumpers, *Winkler's Revenge* (Dale Earnhardt tour edition cover)
4. No Steers, *Boar Riding Hippies*, any press
5. Dead Horse Kickers, *Alone In a Crowd Tribute* 10"

RECORD REVIEWS

Hey! Person putting your reviewable in the mail: full album art is required for review.
Pre-releases go into the trash.

"Consider Buddy Holly on crank with a gigantic, fake horse cock falling out of his pants and you're on the right track."
–Keith Rosson

86 MENTALITY: *Final Exit:* 7"
Holy crap, did I ever like this one. This is one of those records that I like so much that I don't have much to say; I just sit mouth agape for a few minutes and then coil into a ball of punk rock fury and explode out of my chair and through the unopened door. Imagine an angrier version of Negative Approach. Loved it. –The Lord Kveldulfr (Deranged)

ACTS OF SEDITION: *Crown Victoria:* 7"
If the cover leaves a little to be desired (a watercolor of a smoking cop car resting in some bushes, *Dukes of Hazzard*-style), they generally make up for it with what's captured in the grooves. Admittedly, it's hardcore (and yes, I've lately found myself bored to tears by 95% of the hardcore that comes my way these days), but there are interesting little sections, creative dips and curves in this road they're paving that sets them apart from the thousands of other bands that're just following the verse-chorus-verse-breakdown-chorus formula. Couple that with the whipsmart lyrics and spot-on politics that are stitched up and down the sides of this thing, and you could do much worse than *Crown Victoria*. –Keith Rosson (Bloodtown)

ALCOHOLICS UNANIMOUS: *20 Years of Tanked Up Tunes:* CD
Okay, right off the bat, these guys get points for covering Jimmy Liggins' "Drunk." A mighty fine tune, that one, as is his equally coverable "I Ain't Drunk, I'm Just Drinkin'." Gotta love a band that knows their drinkin' songs and, based on the selection here, these guys have made a career out of bein' well versed in the classics. While normally such single-minded attention to one subject, especially when we're talking a span of two decades, would be the kiss of death for such an endeavor, and things do wear a bit thin the closer one gets to the end, the fact that they are wise enough to pluck covers from a wide variety of styles—not to mention penning a few of their own, including the beloved punk holiday anthem "Santa Claus DWI"— to get the most mileage out of what is essentially a one-trick pony. Although I'm most partial to the earliest stuff here, courtesy of the band's late '80s-early '90s lineup(s), all here are delivered with enough joyously sloppy abandon that one can't help but smile. Definitely one to toss onto the player at the next straight edge club meeting. –Jimmy Alvarado (Steel Cage)

AMBITIONS: *Stranger:* LP
Frustrating. If I had one word to sum up *Stranger*, that'd be it. The packaging is beautiful (wonderfully colorful and ambiguous artwork and some of the prettiest, multicolored splatter vinyl I've ever seen), the production is glossy and full, the lyrics are well written, and yet… it resounds with the impact of a band that's restraining themselves. Firmly rooted in modern, smart hardcore but with enough variance in tone that a listener's either gonna think a) *"Mein Gott!* They perform such brilliant and disquieting pretty parts before they go all chunka-chunka! And what a beautiful set of pipes the vocalist has, while other members of the band utilize their more rough-hewn voices to provide fist-pumping singalongs and choruses! *Stranger* is a true *raison d'art!"* Or, like me, you may think b), which is, "They sound like they're a super-talented band that's obviously good at songcraft. A band that's totally got it within them to just go the fuck off every once in a while. I wish they would; chances are they'd lay waste to all around them and I'd like this record a lot more if I just heard *one specific instance* where they went flat out with the speed and shrieks and energy. But they don't, and therefore I'm forced to flip the record over and over again, trying to hear it in a new way, searching for that moment." There are bands that display passion and intent with breakdowns and well-placed pickslides and fairly tuneful melodies that cascade into midtempo hardcore songs that are trying like hell to become anthems but don't quite make it. Then there are bands that just fucking go for the throat and everything's at full tilt all the time, from start to finish. Ambitions has a lot of one and not quite enough of the other: the result is a band that sounds like they're continually holding themselves back and, ultimately, the record falls short of being memorable because of it. –Keith Rosson (Bridge 9)

ANATOMIC BOMB: *Partial Rudity:* CD
I really like the fact that these kids aren't afraid to comment on more than how much fun it is to fart in public and equally innocuous subject matter. They articulate their feelings well enough that the lyrics don't come off as trite, and they perform their tunes with a tightness that takes some time to acquire. That said, I really wish they'd shitcan the Rancid-derived ska/punk thing and try to come up with something that sets them apart from the herd. Seriously, if you really like Caribbean rhythms, how about opting for a chutney-punk hybrid? Ragga-punk? Calypso-core? If there's some reason for a strictly punk-derived musical diet, may I suggest gleaning a little more influence from Savage Republic, Butthole Surfers, Big Boys, Killing Joke, The Pop Group, or early Public Image Ltd. instead? The possibilities of coming up with something truly unique are limitless with a little creativity and some poking into stuff you haven't listened to before, you know? I really don't mean this all as a slag-off or a sermon, but I hear the seeds of some good ideas being wasted on a subgenre that's just been way too strip-mined to be of much value at this point. Besides, ain't trying to transcend—and one-up—rather than ape one's influences the point to being a punk, let alone a musician? –Jimmy Alvarado (Anatomic Bomb)

APE-SHITS, THE: *La Pollution Cuturelle:* CD
Sonically, these guys come from the Reatards school of hardcore/trash fusion. Like the Reatards, there's more going on songwriting-wise underneath all the noise, and they deliver the tunes with enough chutzpah to keep things interesting, but ultimately this never quite attained the "mind blowing" promise I was hoping it would. –Jimmy Alvarado (Super Secret)

ARRIVALS / BROKEDOWNS: Split 7"
The Arrivals have a T-shirt that claims them the future of classic rock; and in the world I live in, they couldn't be more right. Popular music is so far off any track I care to follow and I can't help picture robots trying to sell me toothpaste when I hear anything near the Top 40. Who better than an outfit of great-natured misfits who just wanna rock away from cliché in the present tense to fill my quota of rockin'? Much in the same vein of a band like Rocket From The Crypt, punks are lucky to have 'em because everyone else is too busy buying that toothpaste from Short Circuit, being told that that's music. The Brokedowns: Bravo, gentlemen. I was expecting you to get annihilated by The Arrivals (we all can be defined by our prejudices) but they more than held up their side of the bargain. Blunter and more direct, they celebrate the Pegboy side of things more than Naked Raygun, and are able to slide in some totally catchy sneaky bits in the pockets. (I hear bits sniped from Big Black, Bhopal Stiffs, and The Effigies, in only three songs, no less.) Multi-depth, multi-decade-grabbing Chicago punk. Hell yeah. I think they're from Illinois. –Todd (1234 Go!)

ASH COUNTY SLUGGERS: Self-titled: CD
In his relatively extensive liner notes, Ash County Slugger Randy Brownell notes that two members of this band were in Radon (a band that unfortunately has slipped between the cracks for me and not seeped under my rock), and that the Ash County Sluggers "showed up as the final log on the (Radon) fire." Well and good. This was originally recorded in '96, remixed in '02, and finally released late last year. So. My point is that this one didn't really hit for me. I don't know if it sounds like Radon or not (see above), but to me it sounds kind of like Jawbreaker, and that band never really tripped my trigger either. If you like Radon or Jawbreaker, however, you might want to give this a listen. –The Lord Kveldulfr (Hazzard / Sooooo Intense)

BAD CHOPPER: Self-titled: CD
I have been waiting for this CD for a *very long fucking time*. Just ask the record label's head honcho, who I kept bugging via email. "Why?" you ask. Because it's the return of CJ Ramone! Shit yeah! He's singing lead, playing bass, and taking names. Joining him is Mark Sheehan on drums and some rhythm guitar. Brian Costanza is on main rhythm guitar. Guest guitar on two songs is Walter Lure (The Heartbreakers—and if you ask about Tom Petty, I'll sock ya!) and Daniel

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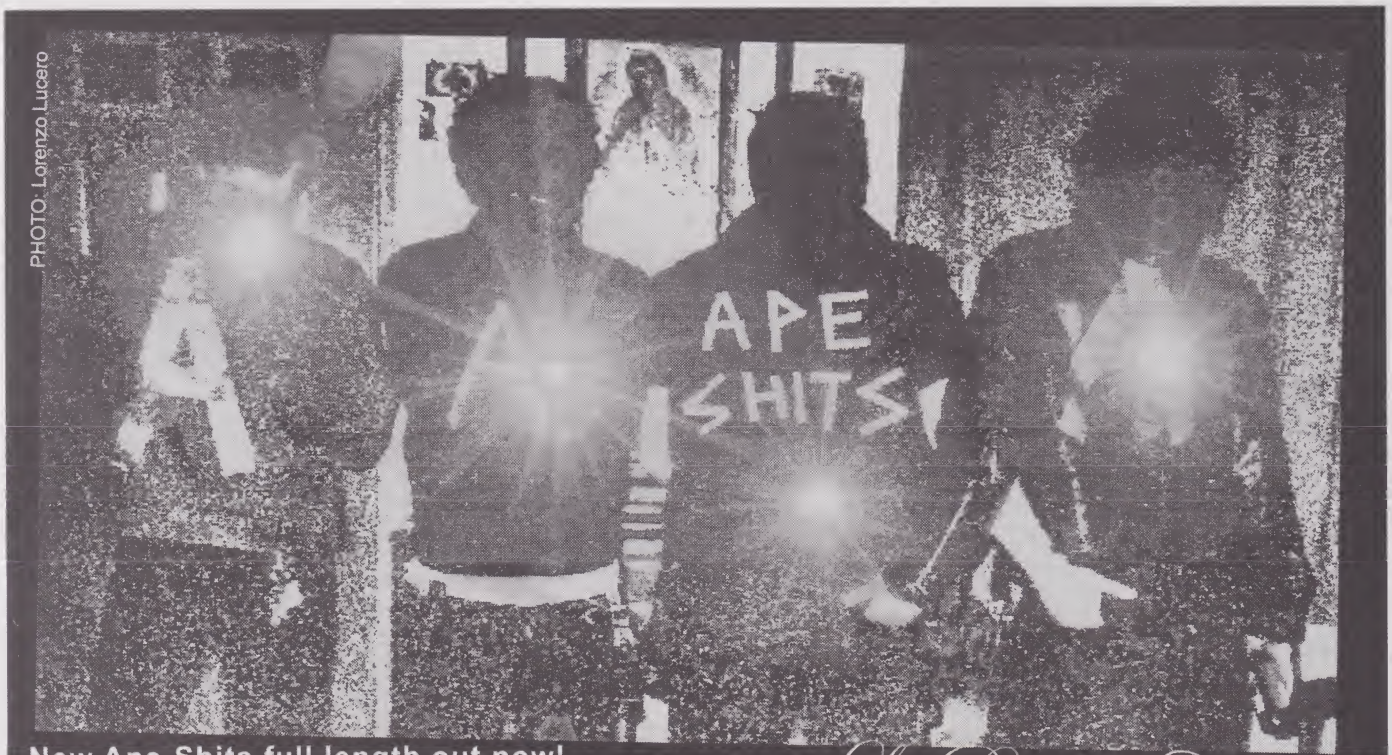

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La Pollution Culturelle

COMING SOON: Faceless Werewolves LP/CD and Manikin 7"

Rey produced the whole hootenanny. This rocks from start to finish. Don't ask me to pick a favorite off this; I just can't. But it's twelve songs, and it's fantastic. That's really all you need to know. Who knows, maybe they will even tour? If so, I may have to bring an extra pair of boxers. –Sean Koepenick (Acme)

BAD SAMARITANS:
***Re-Gur-Gi-Tate:* CD**
Last time I saw these guys was at the Tropico in East L.A. back in '99 when they played with the Stains. Good to see they're still out wreaking havoc. Even happier to see they're still cranking out some seriously pissed-off hardcore rivaling the output of bands like Out Cold and Strung Up. If loud'n'fast is your bag, these guys deliver the goods in spades. –Jimmy Alvarado (Nickel And Dime)

BEATNIK FLIES, THE:
***Drunk on Incense:* CD**
Eighties garage rock champs from DC return with a new release. Loud, fuzzy, and in your face, this record will split your eardrums. "Runnin Free" and "Blue Early Morn" are lodged in my brain. But they all rock hard. Think Dee Dee Ramone jamming with The Heartbreakers while Thunders is passed out in the hotel room and you get the idea. Cool covers of The Slickee Boys and Echo & The Bunnymen too. –Sean Koepenick (Beatscene)

BILLYBONES, THE: *We're Selfish:* 7" 45
The title track is one of those songs that i ((rightly or wrongly)) strongly associate with the L.A. punk rock tradition circa 1982-present: Produced just enough so that the song is quite incapable of kicking your ass with its potential rawness, but not well-crafted enough to smack you around with its latent genius—in other words, a song that, by rights, should be maybe the fifth song on the first side of an album masquerading as a song that somehow is clamoring to be heard as the a-side of a single. I kinda like it 'cause it sounds a little like the Humpers, although the Humpers would have been canny enough to add a bridge or some god damn thing in the middle ((or maybe they just woulda swung the microphone over their head like a lasso, who the hell knows)). "All Excess" sounds like more of the same, until the welcome and unexpected addition of a little two-note guitar riff a la Shelly/Devoto/Diggle that completely changes the nature of the tune for the good ((sez me)). The b-side is a nifty pummeling of Roxy Music's "Editions of You," and, while no Roxy Music fan be i, as far as i'm concerned, if Mr. Ex-Skulls Vocalist isn't gonna ride herd on all our asses with some timely What? Records rawness, i'd rather see him following his latent Limey pre/post/punk Ferry/Shelly/Devoto/Digglisms than loosing L.A.'s umpteenth batch of songs that sound like they wanna be on that one BYO comp upon the world. But, then again, purple-with-green-spots vinyl is pretty cool so what's it to me anyway? BEST SONG: "All Excess" BEST SONG TITLE: "We're Selfish," just because it seems like it's in the "We're Desperate" tradition, which, prior to the advent of "We're Selfish," was not a tradition at all owing to a paucity of followers. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Billy Bones" was the name of the pirate captain who crossed Long John Silver in *Treasure Island*, which remains one of my favorite books to this day. –Rev. Nørb (Dr. Strange)

BILLYCLUB: *No Justice:* CD
Some great tough guy punk from a band that has been doing this for ages and you can tell. The songs are well written and everything fits just right. The sing-along vocals are infectious and the production is really good. A cut above for the genre, for sure. –Ty Stranglehold (Cult Jam)

BLUNDERBUSS: Self-titled: CD
Blunderbuss hails from Pittsburgh, and while I've never been to that fair destination, this music is what I imagine the city to sound like: a slow, churning, methodically metallic cacophony, like someone banging on factory pipes with a hammer while a large engine rumbles rhythmically, keeping time. The songs are noise-rock dirges that are content to plug along for a few minutes in Shellac-like repetition before exploding in a swirl of coppery guitars and the rigorous thumping of the drums. "Sin Built Stairs" builds on a menacing bass line that vibrates so hard I checked my cell phone thinking I had a call. Slint and Jawbox would round out a great bill with Blunderbuss opening. –Josh Benke (Escape Artist)

BORN BAD: *Moron Music:* 7" EP
Nice bit of spastic, scrappy thrash here, with lyrics addressing blind faith, police brutality, snooty old punks, and stupid young punks. From the sound of 'em, I'm betting these guys rip shit up live. –Jimmy Alvarado (Fashionable Idiots)

BOULEVARD TRASH: Demo: CD
Holy shit is this overdue. I got this when I met these kids in Milwaukee last winter, but through moves and messes, I didn't find it again until just now. I really am wicked sorry about that (and I still have Dave's bandana if he wants it back). They've got that Replacements-type pop down (think Bent Outta Shape or Ringers) with a pretty hefty shot of adrenaline and a little added snottiness. Good stuff. I'm hoping they've put more out by now. –Megan (Self-released)

BROKEN BOTTLES:
***Harbor Lane Homes:* 7"**
Broken Bottles have me a little confounded. Half of their new crop of songs I think are brilliant. The other half seems a little too easy, a little too redundant, and too inside of

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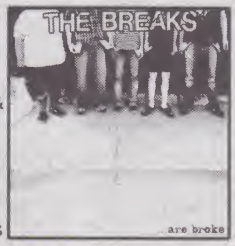

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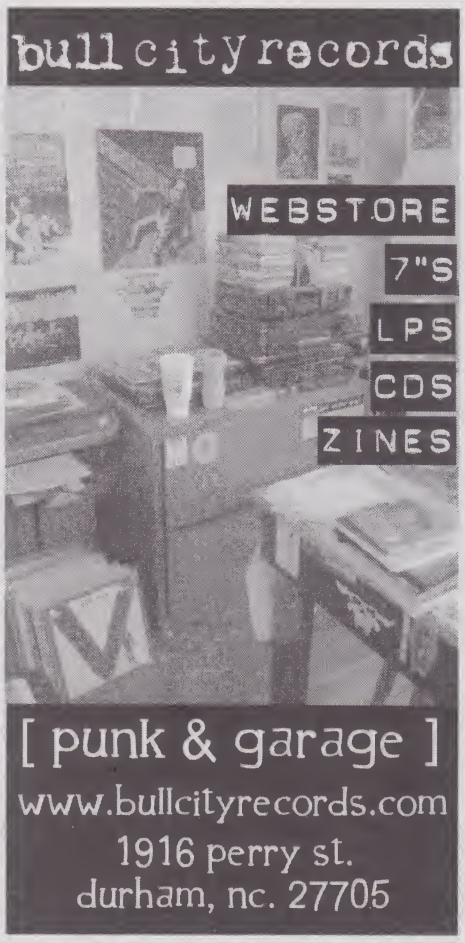


what they've already made. The crib notes to Broken Bottles is take early Social Distortion, take out prison and rockabilly, replace with mental illness and skateboarding, and steep it in the veneered decay of Orange County. On this single, "Skateboarder" is a little weird in the fact that it'd be best as an "after-skate" cool down tune. It's mid-paced and not something to get you pumped before or during a session. Even when Jess sings "skateboard and destroy," it sounds less an anthem and more a lament. That said, "On the Couch," captures what I love about these guys. You can hear the illness and defiance, the cracks in the façade, the mold in the ceiling all above them, and the pacing suits 'em to a tee. –Todd (Bat Skates / No Front Teeth)

BROKEN BOTTLES: *Hospital:* CD
Broken Bottles is one o' them bands that make cantankerous punkers of my generation sound like total fuckin' ninnies when they start whinin' that punk has consistently sucked since 1981 and that there are no good bands that "get" it anymore. Vocals that sound like Mike Ness coming off the tail end of a helium bender spewing deceptively butt-simple lyrics, tunes steeped with the perfect amount of "thud," cranked up guitars informed by OC's glory days, these guys have the sound down pat and manage to channel everything that Social Distortion has been lacking since 1983 and make the whole thing sound utterly contemporary. –Jimmy Alvarado (TKO)

CAN KICKERS, THE: *Dark Molly:* 7"
The Can Kickers play loud, raucous, off-the-cuff old-time music, and I can hardly think of a better way to describe them than how they do on their website: "What would happen if Minor Threat and the Ramones picked up banjoes and fiddles and joined a New Orleans-style second line?" It's all there—the "here goes nothing" attitude of early punk, dirt-folk rowdiness, and a certain Cajun flavor that makes the Can Kickers one of the most fun old-time bands I've ever heard. A lot of people playing old-time music are set on preserving the original style and attitude of the music, but The Can Kickers just do it, for the pure love of making noise. –Sarah Shay (Arkam)

CARBONAS: Self-titled: CD
When I was fifteen, I got busted for trying to steal cassette tapes. In the cop room, they made me take everything out of my pockets. The security guard inventoried it and said out loud as he wrote, "Had enough money to buy the tapes." The photo they took of me looked like the guys on the Carbonas cover. Harshly lit black and white, desperate but fun. Their music is desperate fun, as if Cheap Trick threw out the cute guitars and arenas and finally got a sharp edge to go with the great power pop. No nonsense. If you liked any of their 7"s, this won't disappoint. –Speedway Randy (Goner)

CASY AND BRIAN: *Catbees:* CD
Casy and Brian are a drums-and-keyboards duo making atonal dance music about anthropomorphic animals. Now, there's a sentence I never could have anticipated writing. It's hard not to make a Mates Of State comparison when you know their set-up, but from just hearing them, it'd never cross your mind. Casy and Brian are loud, abrasive, and owe more to hardcore than traditional dance pop, with screeching vocals and staccato, jerky drumbeats. The duo is clearly set on hosting, via CD, a crazy, good-times dance party in your living room. I admire their pluck, even if I'm not particularly swayed to join in. –Sarah Shay (Pish Posh Of North America)

CHINESE TELEPHONES / DEAR LANDLORD: Split: CD
Chinese Telephones are one of those melodic punk bands that can be easily dismissed at first as typical. When you first hear the songs, they seem basic and easily forgotten but the infectious melodies creep up on you without warning. Then you hear music in your sleep and realize, "This is that fucking Chinese Telephones' song playing over and over in my head. Why?" It creeps up on your shit and soon after, you're looking for more stuff by them to put in your collection. Dear Landlord: more straight forward in their approach and equally infectious, take the "we listened to a lot of Screeching Weasel records" approach to pop punk. Along with some of that Midwestern "let's all play like Dillinger Four because they're way better than we'll ever be" rock. Sounds insulting, but in reality it's a compliment and dudes pull through with a couple of songs that are catchy as hell. Solid split all the way around. –Dave Disorder (It's Alive)

CLOSET FAIRIES: *Ghetto Girls:* 7"
No, not the Closet Fatties as stated in a previous *Razorcake* review. Closet Fairies, who feature Jeff from Boston's Witches With Dicks on bass, come from Salem, Massachusetts and play garagey pop punk in the vein of Scared Of Chaka and a little bit of the Dickies. This 7" is short and sweet with one song on the A side and a song titled "Union Suite" on the B side, followed by a rager of a hidden track called "Wooden Nickels." –Dave Dillon (Spent Planet)

COATHANGERS, THE: Self-titled: 7"EP
Somewhere in the trapezoid that The Sharp Ease, the Okmoniks, the Mummies, and Bikini Kill make, there's an area somewhere near the middle that takes makes a show of simple, trashy rock, with a solitary keyboard playfully tinkling on the top and snaking down to your bottom. The Coathangers have nailed that grey spot perfectly and add a nice dollop of their own personality: danceable backbeats, fun/sexy playfulness, catchy choruses, and screamy fun. Makes me think of the unreleased GoGo's demo; capturing their garagey goodness,

without the glazed, cute pop sheen. –Todd (Die Slaughterhaus)

COCKSPARRER: *Here We Stand:* CD
At this point in their career, one that spans four (!) decades, Cocksparrer could probably turn a jingle for roof tarps into an anthem for the ages. Their first studio album in quite a while is no less solid than those that precede it—up to the rafters in solid punk tuneage sick with hooks and delivered like only they know how, managing to sound both informed by years of slogging it out yet totally relevant and fully aware that "it's much the same/a different generation with a brand new name." Truly unprecedented it is that a band this long in the tooth has remained so consistently good and continued to write and release batch after batch of bonafide classics. Here's hoping they carry on with the same quality and chutzpah well into the next decade. –Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

COCOCOMA / HIPSHAKES, THE: Split: 7" EP
Tour 7" that came out at the end of last year while these bands rocked the Midwest and East Coast. Cococoma start off with a ripping sonic explosion of punk mayhem, "Never Be True." This song is such a perfect piece of garage rock insanity that I'm not sure I'm gonna get to the Hipshakes side! The shouted gang vocals of the chorus, "Never be true!/Never be true!/Never be true/What about you?" are impossible not to join. Cococoma's second track, "Brain Numb" is an atmospheric, organ-driven cover of a Hipshakes tune that they've mutated to sound like ? and the Mysterians. Fucking christ, I wasn't expecting the Cococoma side to be this good. The Hipshakes side kicks off with a bouncy punker called "Hurt My Pride" that is snotty and rude sounding. Ace. Their cover of Cococoma's "All I Give" is pretty uninspired. –Josh Benke (Tic Tac Totally)

COCOCOMA: Self-titled: CD
Goner Records has kickass taste. Rock and roll without caring if a radio station will ever "get" the music. Cococoma pounds away like some of the best bands on the label, catchy and rousing, clean sound, rough times. I was weirded out because Amoeba Records in L.A. had fifteen copies for sale, when it's usually one-to-two of a cool record when it's on an indie label. Cococoma must have that crossover between rock, punk, new wave, rockabilly, cavemen, skinny ties, blah blah blah. It kicks ass. –Speedway Randy (Goner)

COCONUT COOLOUTS: *Pizza Regret:* 7"
A friend decided to steal a Pizza Hut delivery sign off a car in a small town. No big deal I thought, except I was driving the getaway car. And in a small town they really like their Pizza fucking Hut. We got stopped in about thirty seconds and the cop pulled his gun out at us. I wondered why the night was still funny as we walked backwards towards the cop with our hands clasped behind our necks. Found a soundtrack to this night on this 7". Caught the Coolouts live and they were amazing, energetic, poppy, a nice mix of fun (a banana plays bass, two standing drummers, three or four guitarists, a couple of Charming Snakes) and actual good music you can jump up and down with a girl to. Their 7" is a little more contained but will still blow up the party with the lighter "Pizza Regret," raging rocker "Weekend," and the ridiculously memorable anthems "Spell It out Dummy" (p-i-z-z-a t-a-x-i) and "Head Full of Stones." –Speedway Randy (Seeing Eye)

COME ON FEEL: *Red Heart Beat:* 7" EP
Hooray for Snuffy Smiles! Japanese punk rock (with one Canadian member!). Japanese punk rock is always faster and more efficient. Take the Replacements' *Stink*, throw in some Leatherface, make it tight, and you've got Come On Feel. Pretty much everything on Snuffy Smiles rules. If this were a cereal, it'd be Frosted Mini-Wheats. Crunchy goodness with a sugary coating. Yum! –Maddy (Snuffy Smiles)

COUNTY LINE RD.: *The Birth of Hank Malloy:* 7" EP
Years ago, Davey Quinn and I were driving around, and the topic came up that he wanted to write songs that could transcend genre: pop, punk, country, soul, and folk. Write, essentially the same song, but approach it from all different angles. If done correctly, the songwriting would survive the slightly different expectations of the genres. His thrust was going for something honest and purely distilled. Fast forward five or seven years, and Davey and J. Wang (both of Dan Padilla and Tiltwheel) pair up with Mario (Madison Bloodbath), and they chop out and spit polish four straight-up country songs about atheism, bad weather, and the American Dream crumbling at its foundation. There's nothing slapdash, cheeky, or ironic about the songs. They're all direct shots, the record's dedicated to the birth of a good friend's son, and it's well worth picking up. –Todd (Fast Crowd)

CPC GANGBANGS: *The Broken Glass b/w Rich Rich Rich:* 7" 45
I have absolutely no idea why this record would be any good whatsoever, which makes the fact that it is unexpectedly kinda good kinda baffling. Armed with cheese-ass hand-drawn lettering that eschews all curves ever concocted, this band has half the Confused Poseur Charisma of the Viletones and at least a third of the Tuned-Into-The-Grand-Cosmic-Something-Field perspicacity of the Dirtbombs ((albeit a Dirtbombs whose object of sonic slobber is not so much a reinforced-to-withstand-IEDs woofer as a one inch Sparkomatic™ tweeter)), and whyfore these ingredients should somehow be coerced to mesh into a respectably convincing sonic dictum of TENSION, DISTORTION, and

ELECTRICITY is quite beyond the average Vulcan's logic, which is why record reviews should only be written by Romulans anyway. BEST SONG: "The Broken Glass," which name-drops Atlanta, Chicago, and Green Bay for no decipherable reason. BEST SONG TITLE "Rich Rich Rich." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Ugliest picture disc ever. What the hell IS that, the inside of my mother's eyelid??? –Rev. Nørb (Seeing Eye)

CRAP CORPS: Self-titled: 7"
This mind-numbingly good debut from the all-female streetpunk band Crap Corps hails from Kansas City. The vocals are furious and memorable and the seven songs included are full of neat rhythmic changes not often heard from bands that play such stripped-down tunes. I'm an easy target for records like this since I'm a sucker for well-done simple streetpunk, but this record definitely stands out on all fronts with its tight songwriting and perfect vocals. –Art Ettinger (Big Brown Shark)

CRETEENS, THE: *Burn Your School:* 7"
The first thing that grabbed me was the crazy sleeve art. A freak out landscape of a burning high school, girls sucking on disembodied cocks, a dude with a crazy mullet skateboarding, puking, nachos, and naked guys running around with paper bags on their heads… all drawn in a classic junior high style that had me not knowing what to expect. Musically, the Creteens rip it up with a style that is very reminiscent of the Regulations. Sloppy, thrashy, yet catchy as hell. I think I'll be looking for more from these sickos. –Ty Stranglehold (Boom Chick)

CRETEENS, THE: *Burn Your School:* 7"EP
A blowjob bonanza, high school on fire, puking, skating (weird hand placement), MexiFry Nachos, and hung authority figures, all crudely and funnily drawn on the cover? Yeppers. The same, only the musical version, on the wax? Check. For fans of the Spits and Jay Reatard's more profane work—both of whom I fly the flag for—so yeah, it's an easy chaos to like. As I've said before: being this consistently dumb is pretty fuckin' hard. –Todd (Boom Chick)

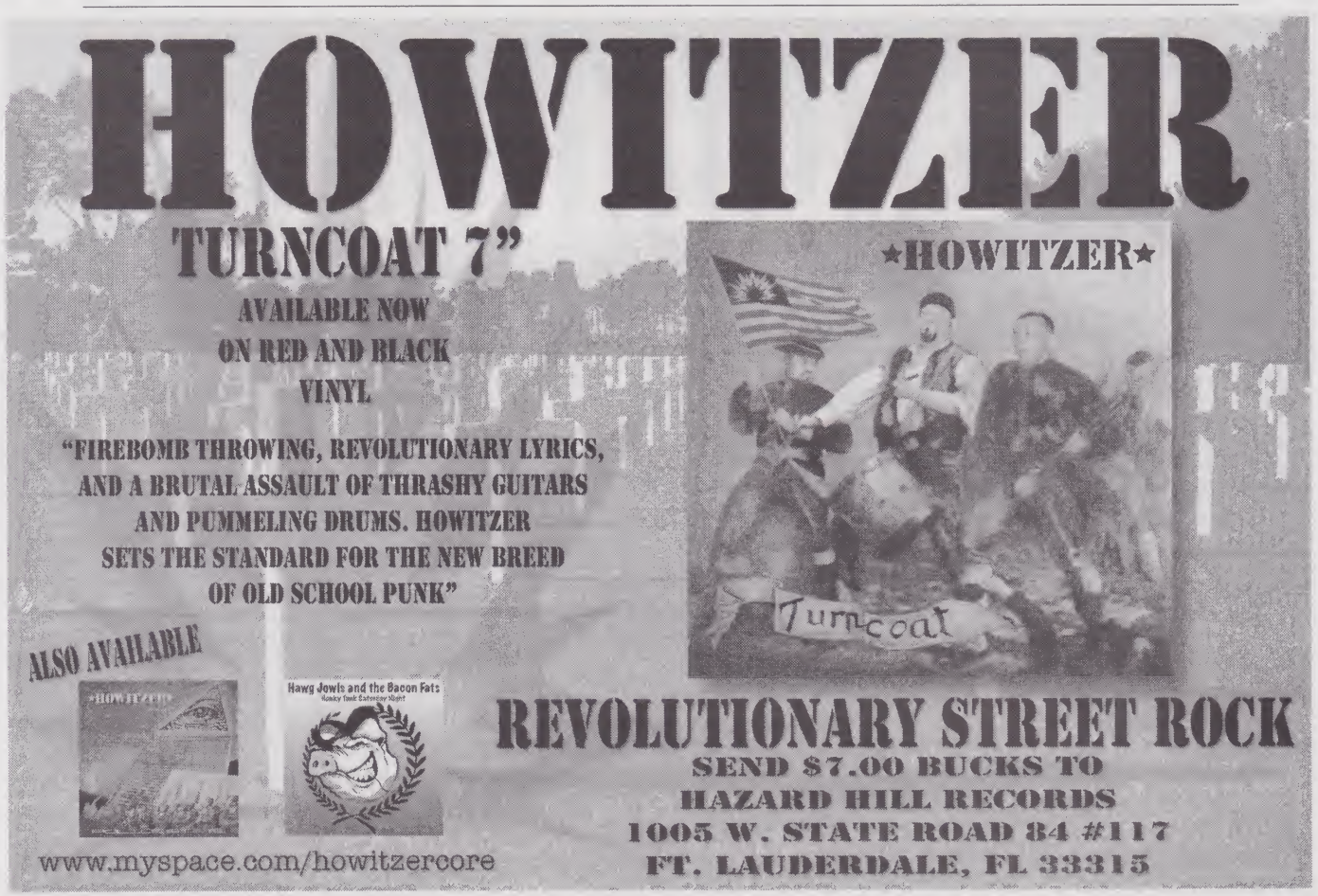
CROWD, THE: *Letter Bomb:* CD
This brings back memories. This record was my first exposure to The Crowd when it was released by Flipside. Twelve years later, it's still catchy, still cool. Also includes the rare EP *Dig Yourself.* –Jim Ruland (TKO)

CUNTIFIERS: *Never Coming Out:* CD
Greg Pettix, the lead singer of both the dearly departed Weird Lovemakers and Knockout Pills, takes the vocal duties of another band that harnesses much of the anxiety-ridden carburetion of Scared Of Chaka. Hardcore? Garage? Both. Neither. Fans of his previous bands won't be disappointed. There's the big record collection feel to the music—from The Animals to The Zombies to carnival rides to salsa—and a great movie monster meets historical figure meets sexual situation slant to the lyrics (everything from *C.H.U.D.* to Descartes to an apache lighting his farts and killing Custer's family to refrains of "my dick's on fire"). Greg even put a hand-written note stating that there's a "rock opera"—that could easily fit on a 7"—in the middle of it all. (It comes across like a PBS special on the old West, riddled with LSD, with a "golden age" porn director narrating the action.) I love Greg's voice. It's intrusive. You can't put this CD on and have it bubble in the background because even when it's quiet, it cuts. Greg's screechy, itchy, adolescent-fascination-in-a-grown-man's bellow cuts through any idle conversation and the band goes full throttle through all twenty-three tracks. Not one song ever gets much over a minute and a half. Yay to that. Understandably, I have a feeling a lot of people will be turned off by the name… but I'm definitely standing by the music because, frankly, this is awesome. –Todd (Self-released)

DAILY VOID, THE: Self-titled: CD
While it appears the Functional Blackouts are no more, these former members have taken up the mantle and unleashed eleven tracks of sheer brilliance. Peppered with liberal doses of trash, noisy art punk, and hardcore, this is not for the weak-minded or sonically staid, which translates to if you like it loud and have half a brain, you already own a copy. –Jimmy Alvarado (Deadbeat)

DAN MELCHOIR UND DAS MENACE: *"Madame Nhu" b/w "So Real":* 7"
Taking out the sextant and plotting the charts by the stars, Dan Melchoir works in the same territories as Billy Childish. Amateur-by-design zeal defined by its simplicity (and very often, its oddity). Prolific-by-nature. Art-as-life first with the strands of painter, musician, and writer all balled up together and inseparable. Here are two stripped-down, subdued tracks that take their time, but are worth following through the trellised garden of a unique mind who gets placed far too often in the "garage" cubby hole, which is a disservice because he's much more than that. Nice. –Todd (Plastic Idol, www.plasticidorlrecords.com)

DAN PADILLA / THE TIM VERSION / HIDDEN SPOTS / TILTWHEEL: Split 7"
Short version. Buy this. It's damn-near perfect. Long version: Dan Padilla: Their song is about J. Wang's grannie getting shoved in a closet during a home invasion and the weapons stolen from her husband are used to kill a family of four, point blank, several miles away. It's about Mamie testifying against them by solely their voices. Chilling… and a very cathartic to sing along to when



less devastating things are happening in everyday life. Quite possibly my favorite Padilla song so far. The Tim Version: Pound out a living, breathing ballad about looking at the scars of living; not necessarily with regret or pride, just taking stock of it all. The Tim Version, like all the bands on this split, make me wish there was another category besides "punk" to place this in because it doesn't quite do them justice, and "great music," seems too vague. Imperfect lexicons: what're you gonna do? Hidden Spots: Ever drank a beer, swallowed someone else's cigarette butt, spat it out, shrugged it off, and rationalized that much worse could have happened on that day? Chattanooga's gentlemen sound like they've been handed a lot of beers with butts, but their answer to that is to make party songs about all means of defiance: church, state, and personal. How can dirty sound so catchy? Mike Pack's been answering that question for years since The Jack Palance Band. Tiltwheel: It's a blast from the vault; Leatherface in full effect, and wonderfully so: snaking guitars, bright tones, gravel throat. It's a song about alcohol(ism), from the inside out. It's not party-hooray, yet still uplifting. Funny, how all four bands can give tragedy some sunshine in the form of lasting music. –Todd (ADD)

DARK AGES: Demo: CD-R
Thrashy, bold hardcore that can bring the breakdowns without coming off like total d-bags. While not as proficient as righteous bands like Government Warning and Career Suicide, comparisons are not unwarranted. The hand-stamped, hand-screened paper CD cases receive high DIY marks as well. Luckily for all us CD-loathing goons, and anyone who didn't get a copy of the demo, these songs are gonna get pressed by Get Revenge Records. –Daryl (Big Brown Shark)

DAS KAPITAL: *Died True:* CD
Das Kapital is not a metal band; just bear with me on this one. Last spring, my friend Troy started trying to get me into metal. It's not that I don't like metal, I just have a really hard time getting into anything that: a) is longer than about a minute and a half, or b) doesn't have immediate hooks. Troy played the same side of an Iron Maiden album for weeks in a row until I was asking him to burn me a copy. I kind of feel the same about Das Kapital. I've seen them live a few times now and always liked them (and, in full disclosure, I'm quite fond of two people in the band), but when I first got the album, it didn't grab me instantly. The hooks weren't immediate and most songs are over two minutes, but, I put it on at work, and sometimes I get quite lazy and just hit repeat over and over. Before the end of my shift, I had "Lions in Winter" stuck in my head. The next day, I brought it to work again and had "A Drunken Wager" following me the whole way home. Then I started playing it at least once a day. Weeks later, it's secured a place in my recent heavy rotation. –Megan (Johann's Face)

DEAD END KIDS / JABS, THE: Split: 7"
No Front Teeth is a special kind of record label. They are taking all the best of what's happening today in punk, oi, and skate rock and putting out there. There are well known bands being thrown in with virtual unknowns and it all works. Europe and North America are equally represented, too, which brings us to this split single. Florida's Dead End Kids and The Jabs from London. The Kids are first up with three tracks that bounce all over the place and refuse to get pigeonholed. It's the best stuff I've ever heard by them. The Jabs bring the catchy singalongs that aren't really like oi, but have those infectious choruses. I wound up getting "Somalian Ketchup" stuck in my head forever. Could it be possible The Jabs might be a new favorite here in the Stranglehome? I think so. –Ty Stranglehold (No Front Teeth)

DEATH IN CUSTODY: *Infected with Rage:* CD
Some good ol' meat 'n' potatoes hardcore steeped in influence from Negative Approach and the like. Lyrics and the vocals contain the requisite anger, the beats are consistently frantic, and what metal there is in them Marshall stacks is kept to a bare chugga minimum. –Jimmy Alvarado (Insurgence)

DER TODESKING: *Birdbrain:* CD
Frayed at the seams, this is some '80s hardcore worship that sounds like it's just barely keeping itself from falling apart. There's a strange vocal blend going on, too: I'm hearing both Martin from Career Suicide and Ryan from the Manholes, which is one fuck of a weird, snotty combo, I assure ye. There's also a surprising amount of Greg Ginn channeling in the guitars, which offsets the fact that the songs themselves last just a tad longer than they need to. Not sure who the dude's yelling at in the first song, "The Doombird Cometh," when he screeches, "Wave your white flag, you pussies!" because virtually no information's included, least of all lyrics. Still, one gets the feeling that these guys would tear up your basement like dervishes if you gave 'em a shot at it.–Keith Rosson (Der Todesking)

DESPISED, THE: *One Punch:* 7"
Hotlanta's own Despised recorded a three-song souvenir of their last tour in the Land of the Rising Sun as well as including three new tracks on the flip of fiery hardcore bliss for even the most discriminating, looking-down-the-nose fuck. Judging from the gatefold on this single, it looks as though the Japanese have really seemed to take a shine to these guys, now only if they could only get a States/ West Coast tour happening (what the fuck, Shayne?). I've done nothing but give these Georgians major thumbs up since I've caught their first few singles some ten years

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ago, and I'll continue to do nothing BUT. This isn't that *pull-up-your-goddamned-sagging-pants, nü-metal, craptacular OzFest* "hardcore." And it sure as shit ain't that *mesh-trucker-cap-pulled-to-the-side-of-your-head-with-an-H2O-hoodie-on-in-90-degree-heat* "hardcore," either. No, FUCK alla that. This is "get in, or get the fuck out" hardcore. The real deal. This is The Despised. –Designated Dale (VIP)

DICKIES, THE: *Idjit Savant/ Dogs from the Hare That Bit Us*: CD
This CD compiles the Dickies output that was originally released on Triple X Records. This mid-period Dickies has its moments, but never really compares with the manic fervor and joyousness of their early releases. *Idjit Savant* has a few standout tracks, including "Golden Boys," "Pretty Ballerina," and "I'm on Crack," but nothing that really grabs one by the (metaphorical) balls and doesn't let go. A few of the slower songs, like "House of Raoul" and "Song of the Dawn," sound bizarrely out of place. On the cover album, *Dogs...*, the only songs that just didn't buzz by me are "Solitary Confinement" and "Nobody but Me." These are the only two covers that live up to the Dickies' covers of old, with the rest of the songs not really standing out in any noticeable way. A good summation is this compilation is that it's about 50% "this is pretty good/alright," 45% "meh," and 5% "what the hell is this?" –Adrian (Captain Oi)

DISAPPEARED, THE: *A Realization of Hope*: 7"
Lyrically earnest, DIY-to-the-bone-proclaiming, basement-proud punk rock. I'm down with that. But, musically, the band owes a lot to Pennywise and other no-longer-in-the-basement bands like Dillinger Escape Plan, where I get the feeling that some of the dudes secretly want to just display their proficiency and let the vocalist say whatever he wants. (Could be wrong. Just a guess.) I'm glad there isn't a list of their equipment manufacturers or sponsors, on the record. But here's the thing that bugs me. They're reacting and commenting on the binary. There's no good reason to react to eyeliner in a song (even if it's in defense of younger punks not knowing better). Dude, eyeliner's a trend. You sing about reacting to that trend, which, in turn, limits the life of your song, and dates it in a bad way. because fashion will be tutus or muumuus or whatever in a year or so. So, instead of a band making something of their own (memorable songs with a distinct personality that have a shelf life), it's a reaction to something that's best shrugged off. Seems like a quibble, but it illustrates a big difference in head space and approach. –Todd (I Hate Punk Rock)

DISCO LEPERS / KERMIT'S FINGER: Split: 7" EP
Disco Lepers: Sounds like it was mixed in a shoebox by someone with tinnitus, but their short, spazzy punk—which reminds me of a thrashy, inept version of the S'Nots—ain't too painful. Kermit's Finger: Jeez, haven't heard from these guys in ages. Still peddlin' the same snotty hardcore keen on pointing out life's hypocrisies, I see, which is just fine by me. Best tune here, hands down, is "Take Your Shot," which illustrates how much things have changed in the intervening years between Suicidal Tendencies' "I Shot the Devil" and the post-9/11 world we find ourselves in by commenting in the second verse about what could be the government's reaction to what they're singing in the first verse. –Jimmy Alvarado (No Front Teeth)

DISCO LEPERS / KERMIT'S FINGER: Split: 7" EP
It's too bad, really: I generally love this label. Sure, not all of their bands are exactly espousing the most progressive, thought-provoking stuff, but you simply cannot beat No Front Teeth's sheer sassitude and spot-on visual and sonic '77 punk aesthetic. That's why this one was such a bummer. The day-glo snot and scabies and scent of unwashed pits just wasn't there on this one. I've got an old split Kermit's Finger did with Zippo Raid from years back; I remember being pretty *meh* towards them at the time, and it turns out that the years have not warmed me to them. Granted, at times they sound *almost* like the Motards, or a band trying to cover the Motards, but lackluster lyrics and songwriting that's just a tad too generic doesn't put ye up in the same league. In the meantime, Disco Lepers claim their stuff was "not mastered, not produced, not engineered." However, it apparently *was* recorded down the hall from where they actually played the songs, because the sound is, uh, thin, to say the least. They have eight songs on their side of the split and no lyrics printed at all. Then again, with song titles like "Nazi Pop," "Puke on the Youth," and "Feces Party," I'm probably much better off anyway. Good label, but I'm gonna have to pass on this record. –Keith Rosson (No Front Teeth)

DISFEAR: *Live the Storm*: CD
I was incredibly stoked when I found out that Swedish d-beat machines Disfear had recruited the insanely prolific Tomas Lindberg of At The Gates/Skitsystem/The Crown/The Great Deceiver as the vocalist for their 2003 Relapse Records debut *Misanthropic Generation*. Admittedly, I was somewhat let down by the direction the record took, abandoning the brutal crust assault of Disfear's earlier output in favor of a decidedly Entombed-influenced "death & roll" offering. The band's newest release, *Live the Storm*, featuring one of Converge mastermind Kurt Ballou's best production jobs to date, reverts to the Scandinavian thrash sound of Disfear's earlier material while taking cues from some of their more melodic crusty brethren in the process. The result is not only the band's strongest

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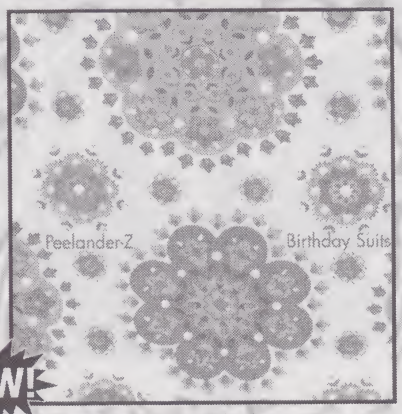

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record to date, but also one of Relapse Records most memorable releases of the past few years. Devastating. –Dave Williams (Relapse)

DISGRUNTLED: *Hopeless World:* LP
First impression I got was this band could have and should have been around the early '90s in Long Beach playing with Know Records' bands Das Klown and The Fixtures. Something inside me tells me that they would have been on many of the same shows. They seem to fit that sound and era for me: aggressive hardcore punk but with a SoCal punk sound. Their three chords of anger also reminded me of the band the Nihilistics. The recording is raw and live-sounding—giving it a genuine sound—with vocals that are yelled but understandable, so you can clearly make out the lyrics. So it kinda surprised me that this band hails from Portland, OR. Tragically, right before the release of this LP, the drummer died in a work accident. Not sure if the band is done. But if they continue on, I would like to see if the band can progress into more of their own. –Donofthedead (Deadend)

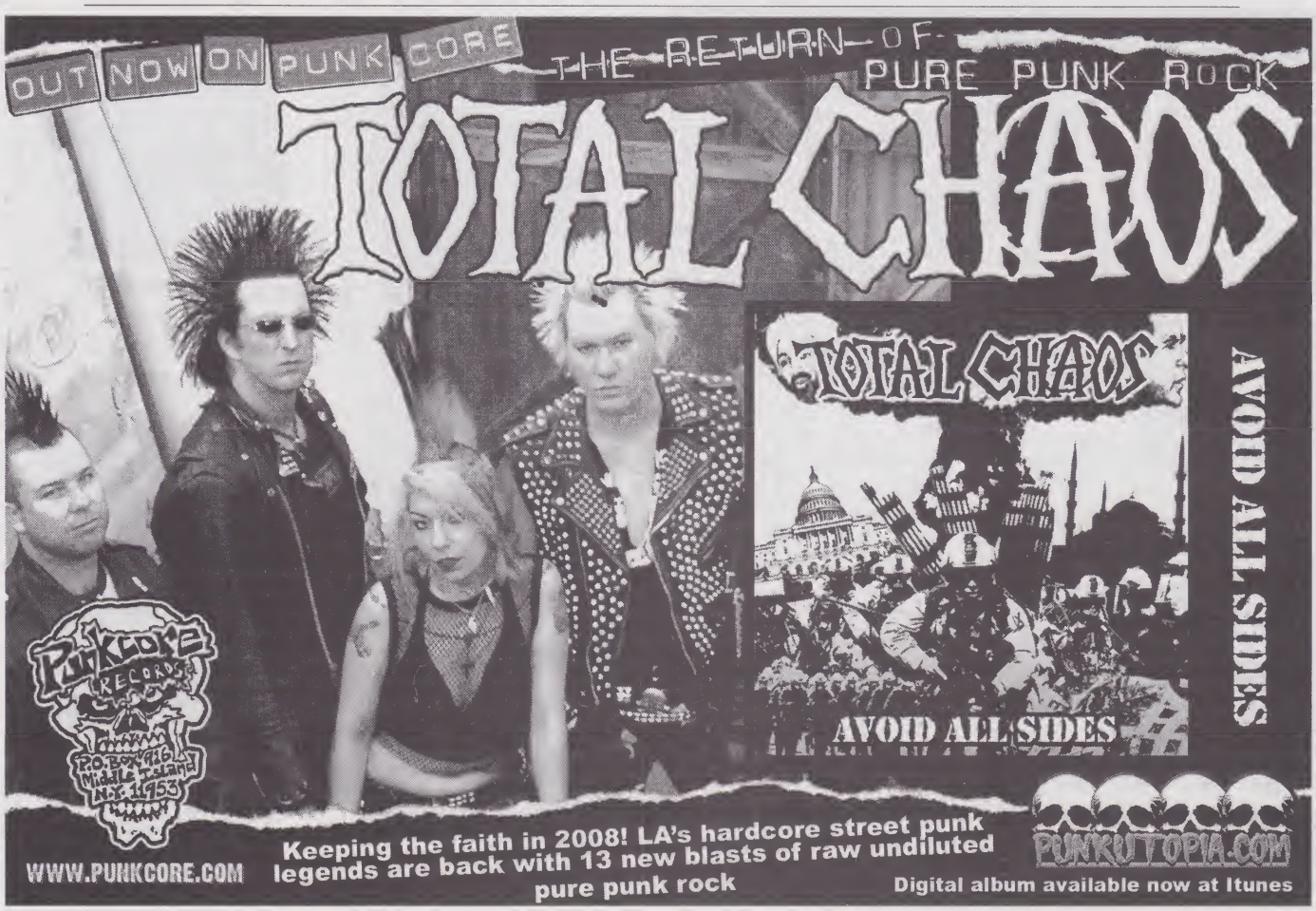
DORY TOURETTE AND THE SKIRTHEADS: *Rock Immortal:* LP
The band was apparently a Mission staple in the early '90s (or at least that's what the one sheet says.) Anyway, when I put *Rock Immortal* (featuring a future Future Virgin and recorded by Matty Luv) on the turntable, the last thing I was expecting was a filthy and horrendously catchy '50s rock record with the occasional nod to old (as in fifty years or so) country. I don't know, consider Buddy Holly on crank with a gigantic, fake horse cock falling out of his pants and you're on the right track. It's tongue-in-cheek and almost offensively tuneful, but still, with songs like "I'm Too Young to Be a Pedophile," "Sperm Comes out of My Eyes," and "The Lord Said 'Ejaculate,'" chances are good it's probably not one you're gonna want to play for your mom. Good record. –Keith Rosson (Thrillhouse)

DRAG THE RIVER: *You Can't Live This Way:* CD
Drag The River may or may not be breaking/broken up, and, either way, they've recorded their magnum opus. Admittedly, I've never totally got into one of their records before, but I can tell that if you're looking for a place to start, this is it. The songs are generally melancholy, and, occasionally, chilling slices of small town life. It's arranged really well; every song stands out. My only complaint on repeated listens is that they wait until the last couple songs to really turn up the rock, and I'm left wishing there was a bit more of that. But the slower stuff is done pretty well, making it a solid album. And as they do on all their records, the last track is reserved for a replay of the entire album, a trick so that the whole thing can be played on a jukebox for just one credit, which is pretty awesome. So, for the next time you're at a bar with one of those digital jukeboxes, I give you my solemn word that it is worth a buck. –Nick Toerner (Suburban Home)

DRIVE BY TRUCKERS: *Brighter Than Creation's Dark:* CD
Shonna Tucker, where have you been? How could a songwriter and singer this great have taken this long to get some songs on a DBT record? Her songs on this record are simply phenomenal and add a strong new element to a band that is already an embarrassment of riches in the songwriting department. I have said for years that this is a band with three members who could easily lead their own amazing band and that continues to be the case, even with the departure of the incredible Jason Isbell. This band is such a great mix of the entire history of rock, country, roots and everything that is good about music. I want to address any concerns someone may have about this being a jam band. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have never heard a band that is as song-oriented as DBT. They are simply masters of the three-to-four minute song. This is their seventh full-length and any of you who are into the sounds of Lucero, Neko Case, Drag The River, or Whiskey & Co. will find a whole hell of a lot to like here. –Mike Frame (New West)

DUKES OF HILLSBOROUGH / THE MERCURY LEAGUE: Split 7"
It's always tough being a reviewer who goes out to shows and likes bands, not a disconnected critic searching for a "brilliant" stab at a band. It's double-tough for bands that I'm ambivalent to. I think that Travis Duke is one of the nicest, more forthright people I've met. And it pains me that I'm not a huge fan of the Dukes. To me, something sounds buried underneath the burlap with their songs; like they're covering up structures more interesting, more formed. There are traces of Tiltwheel-like expansion and glimpses of lyrical breakthroughs in their songs and I don't find them onerous or anything. They're just not my thing when they should be. I just don't get that excited about their music and it pains me to say that. Damn. This sounds like an unrequited love letter or something. The Mercury League: I have to credit Daryl for the term "post-Epitaph hardcore." Since melodicore isn't filling stadiums, bands that would've fit that genre to a tee in the mid-'90s are looking for a slightly different way to go about things. They come across as a band suffering a post-Hot Water Music malaise propelled by latter-day Stung Out guitaring on top, and it's just not grabbing me. I feel like a dick. –Todd (Accident Prone)

EFFIGIES, THE: *Reside:* CD
Reunions—they're a dangerous slope indeed. Some bands come back and



tour year after year, but don't put out any new music (Circle Jerks and Agent Orange—I'm looking at you!), while other bands release new material that actually surpasses their original run. In that file I would add The Effigies who rival Mission Of Burma for "king of the mountain" bragging rights. Fierce, unrelenting, but thoughtful punk music from this band. John Kezdy's lyrics are extremely insightful on what seems to be a political bent. Steve Economou pounds the skins like nobody's business. Paul Zamost provides inventive bass riff-olas. And "newcomer" Robert McNaughton ties it all together with his guitar chokeholds. "Cold Plate" and "The Guv'ner" are good for appetizers, but the whole record will be like a prime rib entree: red and juicy. –Sean Koepenick (Criminal I.Q.)

EVAPORATORS, THE:
***Gassy Jack and Other Tales:* CD**
I'll admit it, as much as I love Nardwuar's interviews, and as intrigued as I was in his musical output, I'd never heard The Evaporators before. But GOD*DAMN*, this is awesome. I was expecting mid-tempo, jangly power pop, and it starts off like a more eccentric version of Regulations. *Then* it quickly turns into some wacky, funny, way-danceable jams. To back it up, I received this at one of the most depressed points I've been in a while, and upon first listen I was jumping around, making the decision I shall travel to Vancouver to see them during the winter Olympics. Added bonuses are the videos on the CD version, plus an encounter with Courtney Love. This rules! –Joe Evans III (Mint)

EVIL QUEENS:
***Lovesong Werewolves:* CD**
This is the sound of a lumberjack mechanically chopping down a tree with his axe. This is the sound of a lumberjack tearing off his flannel and banging on his muscular chest. This is the sound of a lumberjack getting angry and telling off his boss. This is the sound of a lumberjack grunting and taking a dump while regretting what he did earlier in the day. This is all of these sounds at once. Wait, did I just describe grunge? Maybe I did. Maybe I didn't. –MP Johnson (Sunken Treasure)

FLETCH CADILLAC / DESTRUCTORS 666: *Biberati Ut Gothi:* Split CD
The front cover of this disc features three scummy dudes in leather jackets, capes, and sunglasses. Two of them have swords. One has a machine gun. They're standing in the middle of a desert, where they're under attack by some spider monster. The dorkiness is toxic. I expected the music to have an equal level of dorkiness. Instead, it's frantic straight-ahead punk rock. It's pogo-ready. Fletch Cadillac are my faves. They sound a little nuttier, like they may have been standing upside down and hurling snowballs at each other while recording. Destructors 666 are more of the fist-in-the-air, almost oi-ish stuff. Also rad. –MP Johnson (Rowdy Farrago)

FOR SCIENCE: *Tomorrow's Just another Day:* CD
I guess I'm just a fickle little lady. I know I liked their last album (*Revenge for Hire*), but I was in a happy, listening-to-pop-punk-all-the-time mood then. Lately, I just can't handle all that much pop. This is a decent album, and it is a bit more aggressive than the earlier album, which I like. Maybe when summer comes around I'll be eating these words, but I just can't get into this right now. –Megan (Insubordination)

FOR SCIENCE: *Tomorrow's Just Another Day:* LP
For Science conjures the same feeling as the first time I heard bands like Brown Lobster Tank or the Bollweevils or Sinkhole (or really any of the classic Dr. Strange or Mutant Pop records) after gorging myself on a steady diet of Lookout! releases—the realization that maybe pop punk isn't just for young'uns and that it can be a vehicle for heartbreak and introspection as well as fun and silliness. I recognize that this notion is pretty commonplace now, but For Science hearkens an era when this sound was fresh and exciting and consequently find themselves atop a massive heap of incredibly creative new pop punk bands. Coming so quickly after their killer *Way Out of Control* EP, *Tomorrow's Just another Day* is another giant leap forward for a band that just gets better and better. The absence of Mikey Erg and Chris Pierce (Sinkhole/Doc Hopper) seems to have brought this band even further into its own and has made for a painful-yet-hopeful, near-perfect record. Arguably my favorite release of 2007. –Dave Williams (Don Giovanni)

FUNCTIONAL BLACKOUTS:
***The Very Best of the Monkees:* CD**
Apparently, these guys threw in the towel when I wasn't lookin', which is a fuggin' shame 'cause as this collection of odds 'n' sods illustrates, they was somethin' special. Take the aggression and thud of early hardcore, marry it to the dissonance of no wave, add enough pop savvy to make the songs catchy, and give the whole thing a trashy sheen and you've pretty much got yerself a racket that'll stick in yer noggin' and inflict as much damage as peanut butter 'n' asbestos flambé. A tip of the hat to ye, kids, for you will be missed. –Jimmy Alvarado (Deadbeat)

FY FAN, Self-titled: 7"EP
Sometimes—and this is one of those times—it's nice to get stabbed in a vital area musically by a Discharge-influenced band from Scandinavia. You know the shape of the knife when it's unsheathed, you know the moves they take before they plunge the blade, but it's still sweet if they hit a major artery dead-on on the first stab. (To me, it's like watching a great knife fight sequence (a la *Under Siege*). Or, for you pacifists, a gnarly pillow fight.) No surprises, but that doesn't take away from the execution.

For some reference points, think DS 13 and Amde Petersens Arme. Nice. –Todd (Feral Ward)

GET RAD: *Bastards United:* 7" EP
Remind me—is this the band that's STONERS doing *STRAIGHT EDGE* hardcore, or vice versa? Or a little of both? Either way, this sounds like if Minor Threat was on something—what I'm not entirely sure—but whatever it is, it's the right stuff, because this is some pretty great thrash that's fun to listen to.–Joe Evans III (Level Plane)

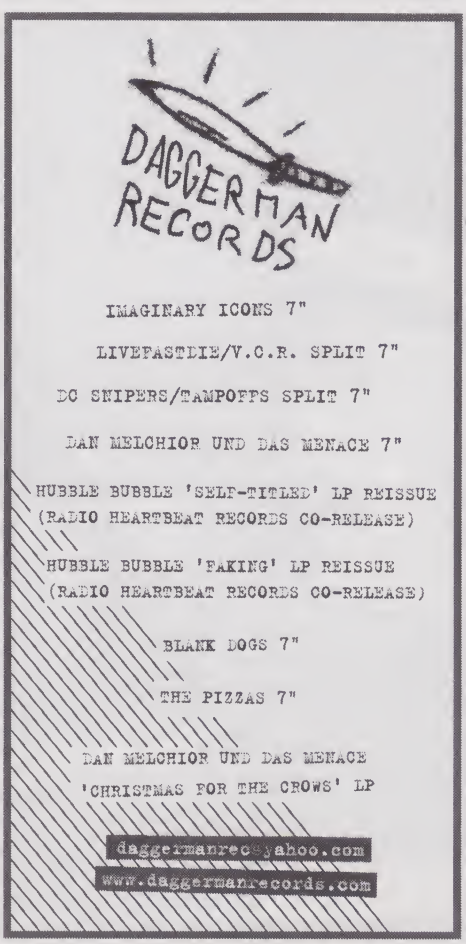
GOD DAMN DOO WOP BAND, THE: *"I'll Always Be Your Girl" b/w "Young and Dumb":* 7" *Broken Hearts:* CD
I've been hearing the name for awhile, but didn't take the name literally, thinking it was sort of a Teen Idols trip, where the look was '50s-tough, but the music was distinctly '90s pop punk. Nope. This is a bunch of DIY punks playing straight-ahead Doo Wop. No tongues in cheek. No crunching guitars. No nyuck-nyuck, look at us, ain't we clever? And it's totally got me: heart-felt, incredibly well sung female harmonies, in-the-pocket, tasteful rhythm arrangements, bubbling guitars, non-hot dog sax, and music that avoids being kitschy. It just happens to be Doo Wop without the reek of dumbasses dressed in matching lettermen jackets, underscoring the safety of dead-era, didn't-really-happen-like-that nostalgia that this could have easily fallen into. Here's how I see it. Turn on the radio: ninety-eight percent of it is a shitstorm of robots pantomiming music. I'm not even talking punk music. I'm talking music that's good, that hasn't been played to absolute death, that hasn't been infected and denatured by industry, bloated egos, or spreadsheets. So I'm totally backing DIYers taking up the abandoned musical from decades past—Stax-style soul, Sun-style country, whatever-style Doo Wop—and making great music that's got a beat and you can dance to. Just by considering their name, I've got to assume they're in it for all the right reasons and that just sweetens my feelings for 'em. –Todd (7" Self-released, CD: Afternoon)

GORDON GANO'S ARMY: *Fifty Hours:* 7"EP
Great debut release from an English DIY punk band. Gordon Gano's Army has the cleanly polished, hard-gemlike quality of early Jam raveups: anthemic but not in "dudebroyeah" or soundtrack-to-sporting-events ways. Four tight, thoughtful, and tasteful pop-leaning punk rock tunes that're chockfull of good advice, much like Smalltown and The Tranzmitors. Although corporations and their collusion with governments across the world is a horrible practice and there's ample evidence that the world sucks, you've got to make the best of what you've got, even if it's your stale bread and bad milk making it into the lyrics of uplifting songs. –Todd (AARBR)

HAPPY ANARCHY: *Reset:* CD
Picked this outta the pile 'cause I figured with the name as delightfully lame as "Happy Anarchy," it would be good for a laugh. As a result, I was wholly unprepared for how appropriate the use of the term "anarchy" is in reference to their music: these guys literally throw everything, including the kitchen sink—swirling shoegazer atmospherics, ELO over-the-top bluster, Beatle/Beach Boy-damaged backing vocals, reggae, rock en Español, keyboards, horns—into a pop-coated blender and let it fly, and that's only over the course of the first four songs. Most impressive, however, is that it's good, fucking gloriously so, which, frankly, is a pretty rare thing for a rock band these days. Their musicianship is top-notch, the songwriting is really strong, the lyrics are intelligent—everything about this band shows they really put some quality work into what they're doing—and the anarchic genre melding is reminiscent (if only in attitude) of bands like Argentina's Bersuit Vergarabat. This is one of those bands you wish would hit the mainstream with a vengeance, but either get lost in the cracks or promptly lose their way if/when they do. I know I'm gonna catch a lotta shit with the fuckwits who are upset because I'll find little memorable in an nth-generation carbon copy of Youth Of Today yet champion a decidedly unpunk band like this, but fuck 'em. These guys may not be "punk," but they sure as hell ain't afraid to take the same kinda risks that made bands like Big Boys, Butthole Surfers, MIA, Wire, early Dead Kennedys, Fugazi, and a host of others truly great. –Jimmy Alvarado (Highlark)

HAUNTED GEORGE / HEX DISPENSERS: *Forest Ray Colson's Pile O'Meat:* 7" EP
I like the concept. Two songs each. Both bands do the same songs: an original and a cover of the other band. Haunted George: Really? I can't figure out if the joke's on the listener or George. The first song's a reverby, in-a-pool recording of a one man band that, I'm guessing, is supposed to be coming across as a paranoid stomp through a destroyed wasteland via a serial killer, but it comes across more as ooky-spooky camp that'd be playing in the background of a *Munsters* episode. Hex Dispensers: That's more like it. Their version turns George's "Pile O' Meat" into an Undertones Vs. Marked Men powerpop raver that makes the song sound like a Winston Smith collage come to life: cocained-up, teeth-baring consumers thinly butchering the things that are truly ingesting them. Totally worth it for the Hex Dispensers side. I love danceable destruction. –Todd (Hook Or Crook)

HEART BEATZ: Self-titled: 7" EP
Loud, overblown Reatards worship. Could be worse, I guess—they could be fascinated with Piebald. –Jimmy Alvarado (Going Underground)



HINDI GUNS, THE: Self-titled: CDEP
I was going to make a joke like *"Maryam b/w Count to Ten:* CD" in the title, but didn't, and then I opened this up and saw that it's one of those CD that looks like vinyl deals, so I regret that decision (I'm not going to lie and say I thought of it before seeing it. I have integrity like that, or something). It's fitting, since the songs on here are somewhat jazzy, mildly psychedelic, and fairly light in comparison to what I think the subject matter is (I could be wrong though). It's good stuff, but I wish there was more than two songs. –Joe Evans III (French Fan Club)

HOLY SHIT!: Self-titled: LP
Wanna make a pact? Just you and me. Let's all disregard that twenty or so years after Agnostic Front released *Cause for Alarm*, in 1986—all the way through what Victory Records commandeered through the '90s and morphed into karate chops, questionable metal, and dance moves that required starting phantom lawn mowers—and do some reclamation of the word "hardcore." It's confusing those of us who don't want to be in tough-dude gangs but like cantankerous and fast music that's the musical equivalent of watching a brain tumor grow in fast forward. The only muscles I want to see "flexed" during my hardcore experiences are throats and brains and whatever ligaments are attached to the occasional funny bone. High fives to Holy Shit! for keeping the much-more-enduring spirit of Necros, Angry Samoans, Void, and Die Kreuzen alive. Nice. –Todd (Criminal IQ)

ILLUSTRATED, THE: *Alphabaggage:* CD
Sometimes execution of the whole trumps execution of the parts, and this is the case here. While the individual songs may not be quite be of mind-blowing caliber, the fact that these guys cherry pick from a buncha different trees—one minute they're thumpin' some quasi-tribal hardcore type stuff, the next they're strip-mining delta blues, and the next it's some sorta arty soundscapes that could've easily been Godspeed You Black Emperor outtakes—and are smart enough to not be pretentious about it, make this one mighty interesting listen. Can't say I dug everything here, but I'm mighty grateful they opted to put some thought into what they were doing rather than aping NOFX or whoever's hot shit this week. –Jimmy Alvarado (Livid)

IN DEFENCE: *Don't Know How to Breakdance:* CD
While musically they're still reveling in by-the-numbers thrash—totally fine, but you gotta put your own stamp on things to really stand out even if you're working within the confines of an established "sound"—their sense of humor (best song title this month is "Veronica Mars, Bringer of War") and occasional obnoxiousness make for a much more interesting listen. –Jimmy Alvarado (Get Outta Town)

IN THE RED / GIT SOME: Split 7"
In The Red: It's Mike, singer from Gunmoll's, new band, and it wouldn't be too far off the mark to say this is a direct continuation of that band with a new name. Oddly, it parallels the post Hot Water Music split into The Draft, where the vocals become less gruff and there are more attempts at intimate (as opposed to sweeping) melodies. With a few tweaks here and there, could be played on college radio. (If that genre still exists. I'll stick with my late '80s / early '90s understanding of it.) I oscillate between not being bothered by this and wondering how far away from REM this really is. Git Some: Noisy, guitar-breathing screech that fans for Olivelawn, Planes Mistaken For Stars, and AmRep's bread and butter will be preconditioned to liking. Someone (or many) in the band has a massive hard-on for Black Sabbath, ("Iron Man" is nicked) too. Alcohol on side A. Weed on side B. Jury's still out for me. –Todd (1234 Go!)

INSOLENTES / TRAS DE NADA: Split: 7" EP
Both bands lean hard left lyrically—my favorite line is "Bush, un yankee de mierda, asesino"—but differ in musical delivery. While Mexico City's Insolentes deliver some crushing, atonal hardcore, the short, angry outbursts Chicago's Tras De Nada is layin' down are much more suited to my attention span. All told, though, you ain't gonna go wrong with either side. –Jimmy Alvarado (Southkore)

INTIFADA: *First to Terrorize:* 7" EP
Speedy, sloppy, and spastic hardcore from Chicago from band addressing addiction, television, America's hypocritical immigration policies, and society's treatment of its youth both in English and español. They are not without a sense of humor though—they thank the bassist's father "for looking like the guy from *Kung Fu Hustle*," and "our pastors and priests for not touching us." Good stuff. –Jimmy Alvarado (Southkore)

JACUZZI SUICIDE: Self-titled: 7"
Eighties hair metal via glam and moustaches, given the '00 DIY punk treatment. Falsettos. Cow bells. Guitar "solos." Judas Priest-y. Got it. Celebrity Skin: pretty rad band. Memorable tunes. The Lee Harvey Oswald Band's *Blastronaut*, I can't recommend highly enough, and it's a concept album with aliens, to boot. Both of those bands had previous punks. I appreciate Jacuzzi Suicide's spirit, and I wouldn't rule them out live, but, on record, it's not clever enough for me to enjoy strictly as parody, or rockin' enough on its own merits to excuse a genre of music I had to suffer through (sans irony) for close to two decades growing up. The main vocalist's delivery rushes me straight back to a dark, dark time and place that is accompanied by very violent thoughts. Sorry.
–Todd (Humdinger)

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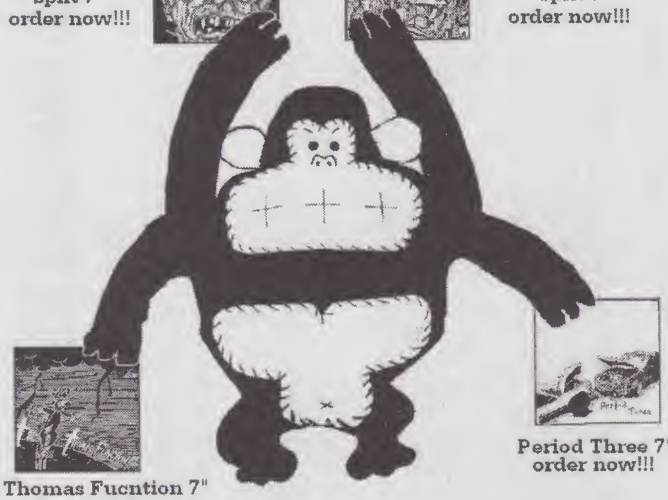

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JOHN SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION, THE: *Jukebox Explosion Rockin' Mid-90s Punker!:* CD
This here disc is full of the type of wild, caterwauling, honking, punk blues that makes one want to trash an apartment in a grand fit of irresponsible hysteria while drinking whiskey straight from the bottle. John Spencer seems to be a polarizing figure in his present-day incarnation of countrified entertainer (I happen to dig Heavy Trash), but this collection of early singles that originally came out as part of In The Red Records' Jukebox Series and other various limited release singles provides incontrovertible proof of the JSBE's ability to defile you with greasy, dirty, lecherous rock'n'roll. "Shirt Jac" jumps through the speakers, grabs you by the collar (of your shirt, Jack!), and shakes the piss outta ya, with a devastating cover of the Chain Gang's "Son of Sam" hot on its heels. The CD rolls along like a runaway locomotive through "Push Some Air," "Do Ya Wanna Get It," and the absolute primitive ferocity of "Dig My Shit." The Back from the Grave-inspired cover art is priceless, with the Blues Explosion rising as the undead to shovel dirt into the grave of Tori Amos, the Pixies, Smashing Pumpkins , Pearl Jam, and Oasis. This shit is what rock'n'roll is all about. –Josh Benke (In The Red)

JURY, THE:
***Can't Fight the Feeling:* 7" EP**
Well, the singer sounds almost rabid, spitting out simple, to-the-point lyrics with enough force that one ends up worrying he's gonna end up chucking up his spleen or something. The music is appropriately fast 'n' mean. Me likee. –Jimmy Alvarado (Electric Mayhem)

KILLER DREAMER: *Rapid Armor:* 7" EP
It's always a treat when a good band starts really listening to themselves and getting their own distinct personalities. I don't know if it's unfair to say, but when Killer Dreamer started out, they sounded a lot like Toys That Kill—which is fine in my book—but the further away they get from that, the better they sound. (Because they sound like themselves, not an echo.) In one ear, I hear the Angry Samoans. In another, an action house party with zombies. In the third ear, a great amalgamation of what's great about DIY punk rock, from Dick Army to Fleshies to Weird Lovemakers to Tulsa. Killer Dreamer seems to be saying, "Let's kill this thing on our own." And they do. –Todd (Jonny Cat)

KURSK / DEFEATIST: Split: 7"
This very silly, very technical grindcore split is hard to dislike due to the sheer hilarity it delivers. I don't think it's a joke record, but I also don't think either band takes itself too seriously. There's a lyric sheet included so that the crazed grind/crust growls can be followed. Defeatist is the more impressive of the two bands, with drum beats so insane that the drummer must have tendonitis or some other dire physical ramifications caused via his craft. It's comforting to know that straight grind records are still coming out, untouched by the related sounds that followed. –Art Ettinger (Level Plane)

LAND ACTION: *Spanish Lisp:* 7" EP
Shouty, gruff-and-tumble, breathless simple punk. Scrawled Xerox cover. Hand-written labels. Bone easy… with a keyboard tracking along. Makes sense, being that it's one (some?) of the recently disbanded Trashies and Mike Napkin: Drummer for Many Great Bands. I like sand. I like dirt simple. I like Land Action. Sounds a little bit like the Tucson desert's breezed up to the Pacific Northwest and gotten into some amps and minds. They don't sound like they're trying to be anything they're not. Nice. –Todd (Dirt Cult)

LAST RESORT, THE:
***A Way of Life—Skinhead Anthems:* CD**
A digipak version of the first album the Captain released on his label, which in turn was a reissue of the band's self-released first album from 1982, and a doozy it remains. Unlike the brash, over-the-top punk/proto-hardcore hybrid contemporaries like the Cockney Rejects, The Business, and the 4-Skins (whom singer Roi also briefly fronted), The Last Resort's music rarely ratchets up past a slow-burning seethe. The songs are primal and the lyrics ain't exactly Dostoevsky and often reinforce rather than belie the skinhead stereotype, but the conviction in the delivery and the ever-present anger bubbling just under the surface adds a sense of real menace to things. Despite any shortcomings, this is an undisputed classic of the genre, and the fact that—as per usual—a number of outtakes, demos, and compilation cuts have been tacked on make this reissue all the better. –Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

LEMURIA: *Get Better:* LP
Hot damn, what a band! After a coupla great singles and a fantastic side of a split LP, the debut full length from Buffalo's finest is finally here. This band is such a perfect mixture of pop/punk and good indie that it blows my mind. When I say good indie, I am talking about Spinanes, Velocity Girl, Go Sailor, and The Lemonheads. Simple, basic, warm pop songs for a crisp autumn afternoon is what I am saying. The boy/girl trade-off vocals are to die for and the songs are just unbelievable. After seeing them live I was blown away and have been waiting impatiently for this LP to come out. Now that it is in my hands I can not stop playing it. It is very easy to keep flipping it over and over. Lemuria knock it out of the park here with huge hooks, great production, and real heart. Pop songwriting simply does not get any better than this. –Mike Frame (Asian Man)

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LICK LICK: Self-titled: CD
First off, I'm going to ignore this band's stupid name. Second, I'm going to ignore the psychedelic cover that focuses in on a drawing of a head of a raccoon. (At least I think that's a raccoon.) Third, I'm going to ignore that a member of the band looks like a cross between Ben and Jerry of ice cream fame. Fourth, I'm going to ignore that the label they're on is called "Australian Cattle God Records." The music itself, however, is somewhat hard to ignore, as it's pretty quirky and weird. The initial comparison that came to me was that it sounds a lot like Mr. Bungle with female and male vocals trading off. The female vocals says "we're quirky" and the male vocals say "we've still got some rock sensibility," but the last song is so horrendous ("lick lick on your way down to hell") as is its title ("Team Thong") that the slim chance this had of any profitability in my eyes was swept away. I'll be honest; I'm amazed I even made it to the last song. –Kurt Morris (Australian Cattle God)

LOVE SONGS: *Hot Buns (The Sequel to the Theme of the Sequel to Top Gun): 7"*
I wish more bands were like Love Songs. I'm at a point if I go out to see a band, I want to see a *show*, and these guys deliver, full '80s heavy metal meets Hickey attack and all. The A-side claims to be the sequel to the theme of the sequel to *Top Gun*, and, well, it's just that. Don't be mad at me for not being able to expand on it more than that; be happy there's a band that will actually sit down, think of, and execute an idea like that. The B-side is a more standard number, which I'm fairly sure isn't sung by Craig Ums, but still great. Pick this up, as well as their underrated full lengths. –Joe Evans III (Thrillhouse)

MANGES, THE: *Go Down:* CD
This band rocks! Totally influenced by early Ramones! Pop punk from Italy! They're silly enough to cover Dee Dee King's (Dee Dee Ramones' rap side project) song "Emergency" and awesome enough to cover the Ramones' "Now I Wanna Be a Good Boy." It's not like this is the most original stuff of all time, but sometimes you just want good, familiar yumminess. If this were a cereal, it'd be Fruit Loops! Yay! –Maddy (Fast Music)

MANIFESTO JUKEBOX / A DEATH IN THE FAMILY: Split: CD
Both of these bands feast on a heavy portion of Hot Water Music, Leatherface, Hüsker Dü, and Samiam in their musical diet and it permeates through the tracks provided on said aluminum slab. It's been done, sometimes not very well. Death In The Family and Manifesto Jukebox do it well. –Dave Disorder (Poison City / Combat Rock)

MANNEQUIN MEN: *"Private School" b/w "Sewers": 7"*
The A-side's the gem. Total Iggy strut, but with a modern high kick of The Chargers Street Gang or the more epic We March songs, so you know you're getting your ass handed to you in real time, not by a time capsule. Dirty, yet classy. Charismatic, but in an STD, and possibly crabs, sexdanger way. Wiggly, but in a slimy—not spastic—way. Very Detroit, bad drugs. Great single. –Todd (Criminal IQ)

MANS, THE: *JC / BC b / w First Love / Too Close: 7" 45*
I like the fact that bands have pretty much stopped recording in real recording studios. It never ceased to amaze me how much time and money could be spent on pointlessly neutering a guitar sound. I assure you, sir, these guitar sounds will knock up your prize filly in jig-time! The vocals are clipped and yelly, the chords are standard-issue garage-punk merchandise ((i.e., "You're Gonna Miss Me" minus a chord or so)), and the drums go THUD-WHACK-THUD-WHACK-THUD-WHACK-THUD-WHACK. You were expecting maybe Paderewski? BEST SONG: "JC/BC" BEST SONG TITLE: "Too Close" i guess? FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Clocking in at a hefty nine letters, Boom Chick Records' logo is the most verbose Monkees logo ripoff known to me. –Rev. Nørb (Boom Chick)

MANS, THE: *JCBC: 7"EP*
It'd be difficult to get more caveman-y on record, it's hard to not make a Supercharger reference, and the recording is so hot that it physically makes me wince, like the record's taunting me by cocking back its arm to throw a rock at my head. –Todd (Boom Chick)

MANVILLE: *Gettin' Freak Nasty: 7"*
Everything about the band's name, the title of their record and its esthetics are completely misleading about the sort of music that they actually play. The cover is a complete rip off of another 7". Something makes me want to say Pennywise. The song titles include "Bun Battle," "Baby Shit," and "Taint, Maine." The band's name is "Manville" and, finally, the record is called *Gettin' Freak Nasty*. It doesn't take a genius to think 1+1+1+1 = bogus bro-punk. Well, unless the plant fucked up and pressed another band's music here, Manville fooled the shit out of this sheep with its bro-wolf's clothing.

What you're actually getting on here is really tight, aggressive, screamy, metallic punkish hardcore. Despite the heinous song titles and all that other crap, this is actually decent. –Stevo (Yosada)

MÄRVEL: *Thunderblood Heart:* CD

…hmm, SURELY no potential lawsuits looming on the horizon with THAT moniker! Anyway, MÄRVEL are a Swedish super-hero trio who rock utilizing the standard Swedish Rock Algorithms set down by the Nomads and still in use today to hoodwink dopey Americans: 1) Overproduce a stripped-down sound ((the American mind cannot cope with this tactic, it's, like, too hard for us to understand or something)); 2) Keep guitars turned up ((particularly baffling concept to Englishmen)); and 3) Always present the rock as ROCK, never as anything that might be construed as even vaguely sub-Rock. Basically, what this means is that the band sounds like Daniel Rey-era Ramones playing KISS songs, but all thwacked up in your face as if you were listening to the Hives or Nomads or something ((by the way, that new Hives album everybody likes sucks. I bought it because the cover was cool. Sue me.)). Now, while a loud, stripped-down sound is usually a good thing, as far as ROCK qua ROCK goes, i like my ROCK to have, like, a bunch of shit goin' on in it. I mean, it's ROCK! I want my Joe Perry to be douchebaggin' off in one direction, and my Brad Whitford to be douchebaggin' off in another direction, and my whomever-the-hell-Aerosmith's-bass-player-was to be douchebaggin' off in a third direction. I don't want them goosestepping in unison like a bunch of Nazi collaborators ((COLLABORATORS! COLLABORATORS!))! I want my ROCK to have DEPTH. Alternately, i want my PUNK to have NO depth. The no-depth of PUNK crossed with the rock-ness of ROCK might make for a favorable first impression on humans, but i'm pretty sure the only Swedish band God listens to is the Nomads, and that's only on comps. That said, i can't help but wonder who'd be President right now if hairier numbers like "Girl, Where's My Amulet?!" would have been released like forty years ago. Probably Baron Mordo, goddammit. BEST SONG: "Thunderblood Heart" BEST SONG TITLE: "Girl, Where's My Amulet?!" FANASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: I was told by Germans that the way the umlaut works is that you make your mouth into the shape of an "e" sound, then you say the vowel sound ((which won't be "e")) with your mouth still in the "e" shape. Regardless of whether or not this is actually correct, it should provide the applicant with hours of fun. –Rev. Nørb (Killer Cobra)

MARVELOUS DARLINGS: *I Don't Wanna Go to the Party:* 7"

Being slightly hesitant about checking this band out due to their featuring ex-members of one-time hardcore darlings No Warning, I was also slightly hesitant in admitting to myself and others that this new band—which sounds absolutely nothing like the Madball/Cro-Mags worship of No Warning—is actually pretty good. Ass-shaking, '70s-style pop punk with lots of Thunders-esque leads. The title track is the clear standout on this two-song single and the style change on the B-side makes the record seem a bit unbalanced, but it's obvious that this band is onto something. The most questionable element here is a faux-Brit accent that seriously makes me cringe, but for a first release, this is pretty impressive. Regardless, along with the Tranzmitors, Statues, the Dangerloves, and a handful of others, Marvelous Darlings are part of an ever-growing, amazing, Canadian punk scene that hasn't been this potent in years. –Dave Williams (Deranged)

MC CHRIS AND THE LEE MAJORS: *The New York University 8-Track Discography 10th Anniversary Edition:* CD

So there's this guy MC Chris. He's a "nerdcore" rapper, which means he has lyrics about Star Wars, "wastin' MCs like they're gasoline in Hummers," and his biggest fans wear shirts with the Mozilla Firefox logo. What many of said fans probably don't realize is that he got started making music with the dudes from Dirt Bike Annie, and this is a collection of said music. It's more punk influenced then his current output, and the whole thing is a pretty interesting piece of pop punk (specifically the New York City scene's) history. –Joe Evans III (Whoa Oh)

MEASURE, THE [SA]: *Historical Fiction:* 7"

Listening to music in specific formats has its own rewards. What's great about following a band through a series of 7"s, when done well, is it's like reading a book of short stories. Themes interconnect. There's an overarching arc. You get the feel and tone and approach of a band. And that's great, that's artistry, that's development; it's not just an exercise in consumerism. It's also a different sort of challenge for the band because the 7"s must stand on their own—several songs at a time—and give a true representation of the band, while being true to the texture to their body of work. These two songs, "Historical Fiction," and a New Dress cover, are on the more quiet and introspective side of things, and they're, well, just beautiful and show the range that The Measure [SA] is capable of. Pop punk is far too often a creative trap. This band shows that there's still a lot to explore, and that's why it's so rewarding following them, step by step. –Todd (Team Science / Kiss of Death)

MISCASTS, THE: *Days of Losing Tickets:* 7" EP

Guy from Fugazi fronting the Mr. T experience. Swirl that around in my your melon. It's not the ingredients, it's the combination. Clearly wrong. –Mike Faloon (Snuffy Smiles)

MUGWUMPS, THE: *Do Time with the Mugwumps:* 7"

First question: Is this band's name a reference to the 1880s anti-Gilded Age

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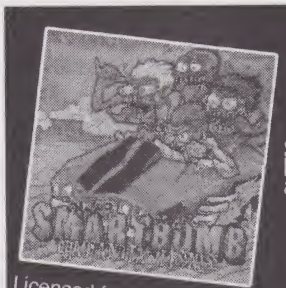

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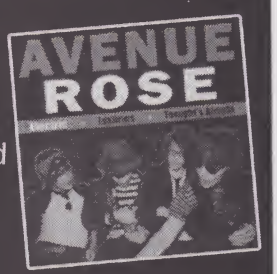

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Republican political activists of the same name? If so, I salute them! Mid-period Ramones-influenced (in a good way!) punk rock. The press release compares it to *Too Tough to Die*, and, oddly, for the first time I think I agree with a press release. Good stuff! If this were a cereal, it'd be Trix. Tasty, but not quite up to the level of Cinnamon Toast Crunch (early-period Ramones' influenced punk could accomplish that!). –Maddy (It's Alive)

NASTIES: *Teenagers Bored:* 7"
Punk rock'n'roll from Italy! Girl band extravaganza! Featuring tight pants and striped shirts all around! For fans of *Not So Sweet*-era Bobbyteens and the Pinkz! The A side is a little boring, but the B side totally rocks! Total dance party music! If this were a cereal, it'd be Fruit Loops! Yummy goodness, not Lucky Charms, but still! –Maddy (Mortville)

NEUTRAL BOY: *Everybody Dies:* CD
I've got to admit that with a name like "Neutral Boy," I was imagining a pop punk outfit. I knew that I was probably wrong because I don't see a band like that coming out on Fivecore, but that's what I pictured. Well, I was way off. This is some good, mid-tempo hardcore with growly (but still understandable) vocals. As it plays out, it becomes increasingly catchy. The songs are bouncing around in my head in a good way. The female backup vocals (supplied by bassist Mandy "Hot As Hell" Reed!) add the last piece of the puzzle that seals the deal for me. This band rules! A note to Neutral Boy: WA is not all that far from Victoria BC. Come on up! –Ty Stranglehold (Fivecore)

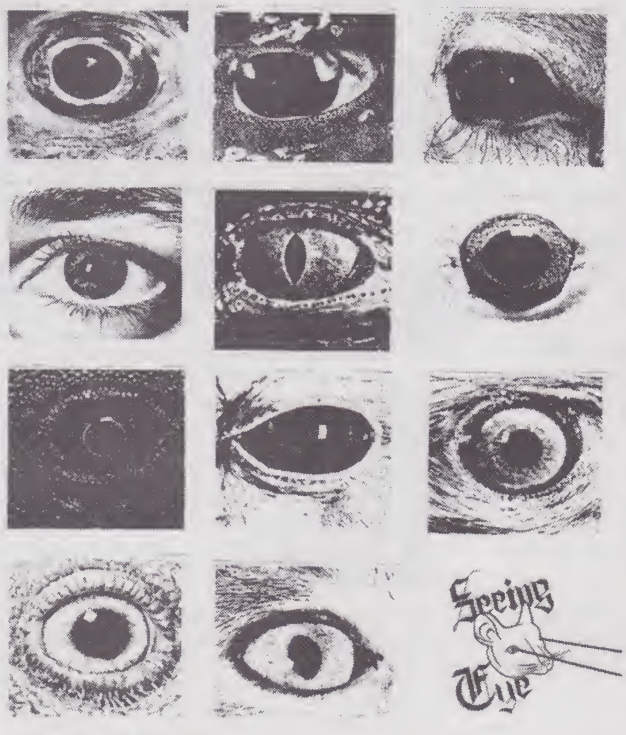
NEW DRESS, THE: *Where Our Failures Are:* CD
Mixing folk tones and punk attitude is ground that is being well treaded now, but that's no reason to roundly embrace or dismiss a band. It's just in the water. The New Dress, thankfully, have poetic tongues, where the reduction to two voices and two instruments distills down to a confident beauty and defiance. At times, reminding me of Against Me!s acoustic numbers (where the hell did that anthem come from? They're just strumming), Whiskey & Co. (haunted voices, washed in sorrow and resolve), covering Billy Bragg (socialist workers unite), and the seduction of a band doing what they do exactly right. All of that made me a new fan. –Todd (Red Leader)

NO SLOGAN: Self-titled: CD
Dunno if this is an actual release or just something Benny threw into his care package to add a little punch, but either way, it is much appreciated. This is a discography of tracks from past—and future—singles, EPs, and comp tracks, plus a few live tracks from a trek to Mexico. For those not in the know, No Slogan are one of the highlights of Chicago's very cool and unabashedly bilingual hardcore scene. What makes them special—in addition to a knack for writing some really good, catchy originals and for picking some interesting covers (their take on Bhopal Stiffs' "Too Many Things" handily surpasses the original, in my humble opinion)—is that they aren't afraid to spice things up a little by occasionally stretching out a bit or tossing in a smidge of post punk to the thrashin'. If this ain't readily available—this one says "40/100" across the bottom, but I dunno if that means all together or just for the ones with the stenciled covers—it really should be, 'cause in addition to being a solid release, it's a nice way to get everyone up to speed on a band well worth taking notice. –Jimmy Alvarado (Southkore)

NOFX: *They've Actually Gotten Worse Live:* CD
As much as the title and banter implies that NOFX sucks live, the truth is that these guys never sound less than great. The reason behind this, I think, is the fact that Erik Sandin is one of the tightest drummers ever. I think it's just hard to sound bad with him in your rhythm section. And it's actually a really good-sounding live recording instead of sounding like the audio was taken off somebody's overworked cell phone mic. As for the selection of songs, it's a great mix of old and new songs, with some stuff being changed up for the live album. If you liked the originals, it's a safe bet you'd like the rearranged versions of the songs. The only problem with the CD is that after the first couple of times, you never really want to listen to the banter again. I think it's worth getting if only for the fact that they have *The Decline* on here as a hidden track. That is, after all, NOFX's greatest, most epic batch of songs. –Adrian (Fat)

OFF WITH THEIR HEADS / DEAR LANDLORD: Split: 7"
Two songs a piece from two of the Midwest's finest pop punk bands. OWTH starts it off with "Die Slow," a song that many people have said is one of the worst songs ever done by this band, but they're all crazy. All of them. This is definitely one of my favorite Off With Their Heads tracks. They wrap up their side of the split with a cover of Warren Zevon's "Splendid Isolation" that isn't too shabby at all. Dear Landlord (a newer band comprised of ex-members of Rivethead and current members of The Copyrights) plays what sounds like an even better—if you can imagine it—continuation of Rivethead without all of the forty-five second songs. Strong group vocals singing and depressing choruses are the order of the day, and you'll find yourself singing along to sickness in no time. Both songs, "Hi Fives" and "Crashing," are fantastic. I can't wait until a release date for a full length is announced. –Dave Dillon (No Idea)

ONION FLAVORED RINGS / THE FUTURE VIRGINS: Split: 7"
When I was a kid, I went through a stage where I'd wear a tie with a sweatshirt and sing the soundtrack to *Godspell*. I



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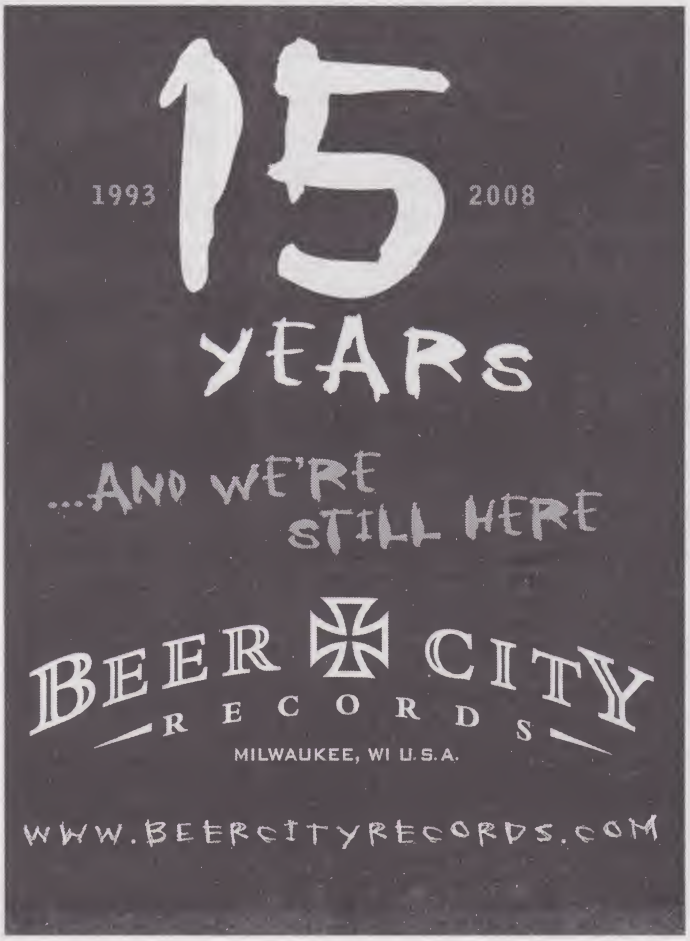

hope some kid out there is doing the same nowadays, but their clued-in parents have been following the anti-cult stylings of Onion Flavored Rings. For such Parasites-sounding poppiness that's coming out of the speakers, there are some bleak, existential, what's-the-point? we-all-become-dust lyrics that pervade their two songs. ("Like a raindrop/ All alone I'm falling.") The Onion Flavored Rings have been a slow grow for me, but I'm warming up to them due to that dynamic. Gives 'em a little depth. The Future Virgins: I hope that this doesn't sound creepy, but if I'm sure that the world's gonna end at a specific time, I'm going to crank the Future Virgins and shoot myself in the head in the middle of one of their songs. Might as well die happy, screaming along with the endorphins pumping: the perfect blend of ache and joyousness, of The Bananas and rat-tumored, bring-more-beer Chattanooga, of experience gained by royally fucking up in the long run for all the right reasons. The cover art has me scratching my head, though. –Todd (1234 Go!)

ONION FLAVORED RINGS: *Perfect Evolution:* 7"
Thanks you OFR for writing a conceptual 7" about the nothingness that is our life, and on top of that, orchestrating it with your own brand of jangly, melodic punk. And while I truly love the directness of older songs in regards to their topics, the vastness that they seem to be discussing in this 7" is much more lofty yet still applicable. It is hard for this band to do anything I don't like. Its realist outlook on life and its authentic take on punk rock have always been great. –Daryl (Thrillhouse)

PAINT IT BLACK: *New Lexicon:* CD
I was fortunate enough to get tickets to the first night of Paint It Black's weekend-long record release festival just hours before it sold out. As I stepped into the crowded basement of Philadelphia's First Unitarian Church, I was given a free copy of the new record a month before its release date, as promised on the fliers. I had some time to kill before the first band of the night was ready to play, so I stepped out to my car to give it a quick listen. I got so sucked in that I missed the first half of the opener's set (Amateur Hour, respectively). Philadelphia's hardcore act Paint It Black has shown tons of progression between their debut *CVA* and their sophomore release *Paradise*, and *New Lexicon* is no different. I believe that "dark" is the only word I can use to describe this one. Dan Yemin's (Lifetime, Kid Dynamite) lyrics are angrier than ever and the guitar parts tore me to pieces. There is plenty of credit due to the production as well. There are some parts in between most of the fifteen songs involving either drums or feedback that are noisy without being annoying, and create a strange vibe for the record. It's only January, but I have no doubt in my mind that this will be one of my favorite hardcore records of 2008. –Dave Dillon (Jade Tree)

PEGS, THE: *Danger's Gone:* 7"
I think I first heard the Pegs on the *Tower 13* compilation. As with most of the stuff on that comp, I liked them a lot. It seems I still do. There is a heavy beach vibe running through this that brings the likes of Smogtown to mind, but at the same time, it lays down a little more rock'n'roll, which makes me think of The Humpers. It's a combination that works. –Ty Stranglehold (Slab-O-Wax)

PHARMACY, THE: *Abominable:* 7"EP
I swear I'm not a violent guy. But do you ever get the feeling when listening to a band that you could beat all of their songs up just for fun? That the songs are like cotton candy being made right in front of you with every spin of the record? The curious thing about The Pharmacy is that I want to treat their songs like a younger sibling; protect their actions a little, even though I don't quite understand their curious ways. If you can imagine the non-sweater-vest-preachy bits to The Weakerthans mixed in with the light-but-tricky pop of XTC, or a contender for the soundtrack to *The Royal Tenenbaums*, you'd get a feeling of The Pharmacy. Not what I normally listen to, but they're pleasant, and I can't deny that my head bopped along to their songs. –Todd (Tic Tac Totally)

PICTURE FRAME SEDUCTION / TRUE SOUNDS OF THE REVOLUTION: *Skateboarding Down Merlins Hill with Penny Harry:* CD
This is kind of a split disc where you have the "Old Guard" and the "Young Upstarts." In this case, both bands are from Wales. Picture Frame Seduction kicks it off. They've been around since the '80s and you can tell in their UK82 "charged hair and bullet belt" style. In 2008 it's still sounding good. True Sounds Of The Revolution are the teenage band here, but they definitely sound more experienced that that. Though they have the same style as PFS, there is a slightly more youthful urgency to their songs. They're more raw. Both bands here are worth checking out. –Ty Stranglehold (Cult Jam)

PINE HILL HAINTS, THE: *Ghost Dance:* CD
Let's not forget the context. With this recent influx of bands that, when described, "folk" and "punk" come up in the same sentence, the Haints have been hard at work and play for years. It's this seasoned, large-brush approach that illustrates how big a force the Haints have become musically and how broad-scoped *Ghost Dance* really is. It's like walking into your favorite roadside restaurant during a long drive. Generous portions. Diverse, but down home menu. Expertly spiced, simple food. Well-worn linoleum, but sparkling clean. Wonderful, personal service, no forced grins or minimum amounts of flare enforced. *Ghost Dance* is, thankfully, long. Twenty songs gives them time to set the stage, fill your head, and take you to their home, which is as much a time as a place. It's a collection of original

pieces, a Riverboat Gamblers cover, and traditionals revisited. And then it struck me, something that's been staring me in the face for some time. The Haints are to the South what the Pogues are to Ireland. Not only do they have a deep respect of what came before—and their musicianship is as impeccable as it is diverse (mandolin, washtub bass, banjos, and bodhran)—but they tap into that originating spirit so much, they can't help themselves from reshuffling the deck and lighting small fires under themselves so they don't get asphyxiated by the past. This record's like watching a fire all night. Crackles and blazes giving away to smoldering and smoking, and the next morning, its memory is still being carried around in your clothes. Fantastic. –Todd (K)

PRETTY BOY THORSON AND THE FALLING ANGELS: *Take It Easy:* CD
What is so damn attractive about misery? It seems like the only things that end up mattering to me, whether music or books (or, shit, even people some days) are all pretty miserable and self-deprecating. PBT and the F'n As are no exception. I can't help but group them in with Off With Their Heads, not necessarily in sound (though Ryan OWTH shows up here too), but definitely in feel. The lyrics come off like they're meant to be listened to in a dark room somewhere with only a bottle of whiskey as your company. But, the way it all comes together musically, sounds more like you should be throwing your arms around your friends in a packed and sweaty basement than anything the lyrics would have you believe. Maybe surrounding myself with all this misery will be the death of me some day, but I can't think of a much better soundtrack to go to than Pretty Boy Thorson. –Megan (ADD)

PRETTYBOY THORSON AND THE F'N A'S: *Take It Easy:* CD
This CD has secret glue, and I don't know what it is. First couple of listens, eh. Reminded me of The Staggers: a band that could easily switch from campfire to barroom without losing power, who (I'm totally guessing), respect the Misfits as much as Johnny Cash equally. But then I kept going back to the record. It tells stories. It has beats I tap along to. I saw them live a couple of times, and Dan, the lead singer, is a big dude who makes his acoustic guitar look like a ukulele and he sings his goddamn heart out. What more are we asking for in music? Nothing. *Take It Easy* is like a pair of work pants. At first, it seemed a little stiff and off-the-pile, yet gets smoothed out and more comfortable with more usage. Recommended. –Todd (ADD)

PRINCESS THUNDERSTORM /ELECTRIC DAMN: *Woodfin Confidential:* Split 12"
Princess Thunderstorm: Given better recording capabilities, they really cleaned out the sound from last year's 7" and are bringing out the full-blown metal. The guitars completely outweigh everything else on the record, but at least it's still got those great pissed-off vocals that range from sung to a vicious yell. And the lyrics are still totally weird and punk. Electric Damn: This band is just tripped-out rock. There are lots of instrumental parts that involve massive amounts of harmonizing guitar solos. Headbangin', mindblowing, hesher shit that borders on cock rock, if you don't consider them the same thing. This makes me need to go listen to the Siege LP. –Daryl (Family Night)

PRIZY PRIZY PLEASE: Self-titled: CD
So I first heard of these guys after a bunch of praise from my friend/their label mate Jimmy of The Sass Dragons. Then I get this, with a fancy little promo/press sheet, which includes "RIYL Talking Heads, They Might Be Giants, Fugazi, The Unicorns." Okay, nothing wrong with that. It just threw me for a loop. Then I put it on, and establish "Yeah, They Might Be Giants if they were some crazy, tiny record store/warehouse-playing hyper punk band" (and don't get me wrong, I *love* me some TMBG). Calling this indie rock is an insult to innovative/creative punk bands. –Joe Evans III (Let's Pretend)

PSYCHIC TV / PTV3: *Hell Is Invisible... Heaven Is Her/e:* CD
What do you get when elderly post-punk effluvia mix with the mannequin throbbings of an arthouse rave party? I'll tell you what you get: you get what you have here; industrial psychedelic hermaphro-core perfumed by the skid marks left in Andy Warhol's Factory-era bloomers. And the she-man behind the curtain in this case is a Quentin Crisp-type coxcomb with a head dangerously full of sorcery and Geritol and funny spellings: none other than Genesis P-Orridge, of COUM Transmissions, Throbbing Gristle, and TOPY infamy. Now, while I respect and admire many of Genesis' magickal subversions and outrages from the past, *Hell Is Invisible...* has the somewhat turgid wobble of artsy self indulgence to my ears. Sorcerers—of the old school stripe, anyway—are naturally prone to doing things in a manner devilishly florid and over-wrought, and should granted some leniency. But not at my expense. Hell may be invisible, but as this record proves, it's not inaudible. Which is not to say that this whole CD sucks, by any means. There are bits and pieces here and there that evoke things like Syd Barrett and Public Image and that I like. And Mr./Ms. P-Orridge's spiritual lineage—which includes such crooked luminaries as William Burroughs, Aleister Crowley, Brion Gysin, and Austin O. Spare—makes *Hell Is Invisible...* at the very least deserving of a good round of listenings, if not outright adoration. After all, how else are all the boll weevils of chaos that Genesis has planted here ever going to get to burrow into your brain and do The Great Work? But even with its dark charms, this CD is, for me, a pimpled

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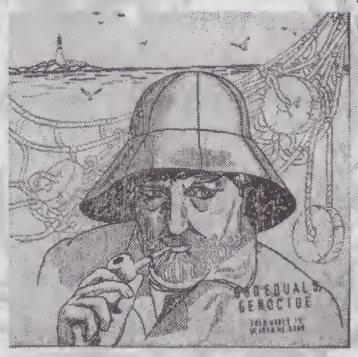

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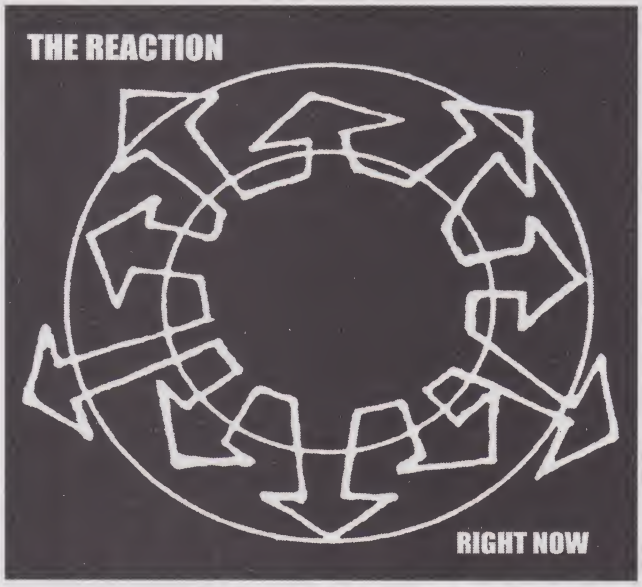

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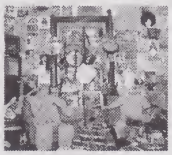
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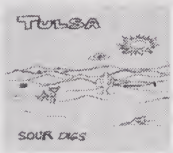

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fuck-belly full of noize and noodles. The sort of concoction that sits in your gut like a lawn bag full of rotting wigs and inspires notions of a good shit and then a nice nap. But note: Chaos Magick nerds, Boyd Rice enthusiasts, and high-minded Situationists may feel otherwise. –Aphid Peewit (Cargo)

PYONGYANG METRO, THE: *Tower of White Tigers:* CD
The Pyongyang Metro sound like an even more rocking version of their town's better-known melodic punk heroes, Dillinger Four. The hard-edged vocals keep it from falling into simple pop punk categorization, with all of the songs rushing ahead at breakneck speed for melodic punk. Pyongyang Metro is made up of former or current members of esteemed bands like Off With Their Heads and Rivethead. The songs all have witty titles and highbrow lyrics, with "New Hindi Ringtones Now Available," "Nobel Laureate," and "Escape Helper" being good examples. It's not quite great enough to make me long for a trip to the Midwest, but it comes damn close. –Art Ettinger (Arsenic)

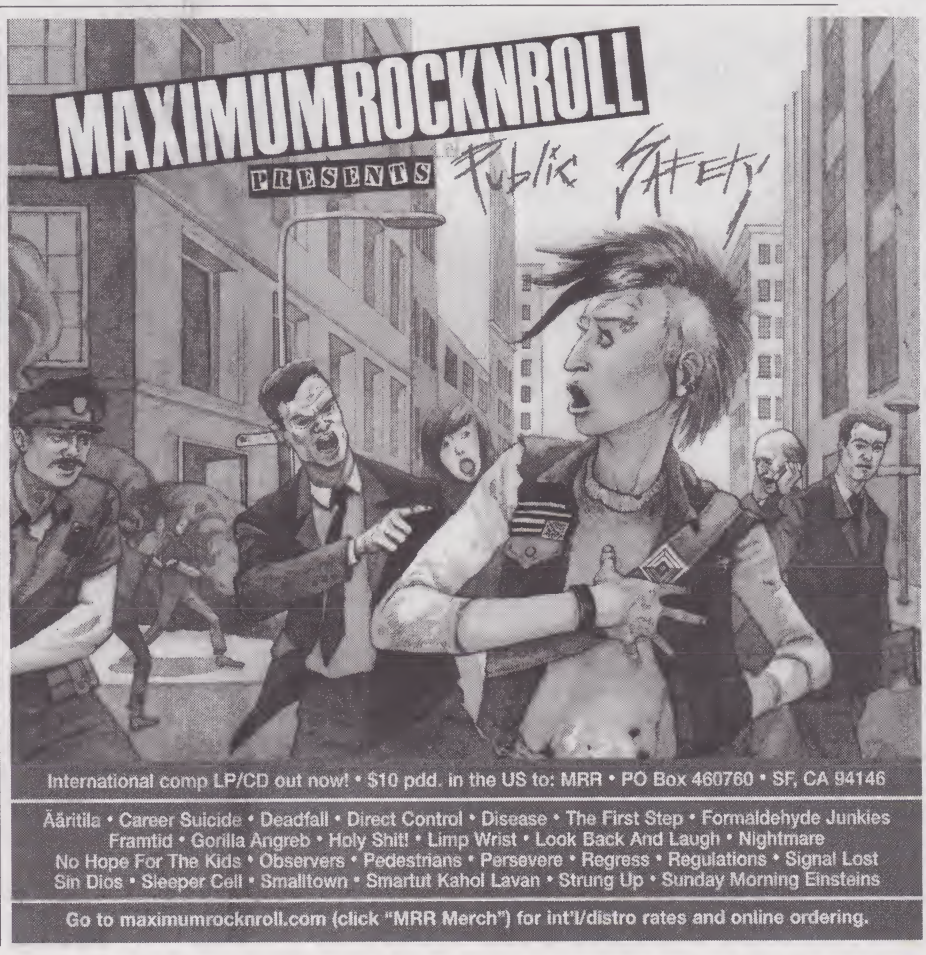
RAMROD: Self-titled: CD
This type of punk doesn't typically do it for me, but I've loved this band for a while. Bowie, Maryland's Ramrod do a Fat Wreck skate rock type thing, which comes out sounding a bit like No Use For A Name, Lagwagon, NOFX, etc. That isn't quite the description I'd like to use (they're better than that), but it's the closest I can get. Dual vocals, frequent tempo changes, and above average drum and string skills can be found all throughout the well written songs on this record. This follows up the *Junk Rock* EP that was released early last year. Check this out as soon as possible. –Dave Dillon (Cunt)

RED DONS: *Death to Idealism:* CD
A couple of years ago—after the first Regulations record reminded me that there are still incredible bands who tour and release records—I began a frenzied hunt for any band that might fall under the "new-band-that-sounds-like-an-old-band" banner. This hunt eventually led me to The Observers, which in turn reminded me that my lifelong love affair with punk rock really had little to do with "thrashing" or "getting rad" or skulls with hats biting through skateboards; rather, it had everything to do with words and music that shook me to the core and haunted me long after the record had finished spinning. Red Dons, the new manifestation of The Observers, picks up pretty much right where that band left off. *Death to Idealism*, their first full length effort on the incredibly consistent Deranged Records, kicks the sincerity and conviction of its precursors up a notch while building on that mysterious, "exotic" vibe that these lads explored in a previous life. Just wow. –Dave Williams (Deranged)

REGULATIONS: *Different Needs:* 7" EP
Remember the band Yes? If not, you're lucky. If you did, it feels awesome to hear, through bands like The Regulations, that Yes lost. There's no need for a thirty-piece orchestra in a rock band. There's no need for multi-part suites or mellotrons. Brevity, man. The Regulations are a big part of why Umea, Sweden is a hotbed for cultural ambassadors to modern day punk rock, and for good reason. That said, this four-songer didn't immediately grab me by the short and curlies. It's more of a Germs smolder than a Circle Jerks blast, but, I'll fully admit that the last song, "New Ways," pounces like a panther and wiggles like a cut worm. On-target punk rock. I'd be a douche not to like it and tell you that if you haven't given The Regulations a chance yet, now's a great time. –Todd (Havoc)

REVEREND BEAT MAN: *Surreal Folk Blues Gospel Trash Vol. 1:* CD
Reverend Beat Man delivers twelve swampy blues and Neanderthal folk cuts in his unmistakable, inimitable, buzzing-electric-carving-knife vocal style, and you can hear the charm, joy, and pain ooze out like chuck through a meat grinder. "I'm Happy" details the warm, fuzzy feeling of falling in love, having children, and growing old together, gracing the listener with the line "Growing up with you is so beautiful and gay…beautiful and gay" delivered in a soft growl. The effect is raucously hilarious. "Jesus Christ Twist" is a twisted Cramps rocker that urges one to "Take a hammer and some nails/ Nail your partner to a cross." Fucking brilliant. Slower tracks like "No Hope" offer laments about lost love, but don't work quite as well as the other songs. "The Beat Man Way" is a fantastic story told over jazzy bass, drums, and piano. The liner notes indicate that these tunes were recorded between 2005 and 2007, and that the Reverend played guitar, banjo, drums, "strange bamboo thing," and cello, a regular jack of all trades. "I don't give a fuck! Just wanna go the Beat Man way." Words to live by. –Josh Benke (Voodoo Rhythm)

RHINO 39: Self-titled: 2 x CD
Rhino 39 were one of many exceedingly good yet maddeningly underrated bands to come out of the L.A. scene. Like the Weirdos, X, the Germs and other contemporaries, they took their U.K./ New York influences and just twisted 'em all kindsa funny ways, resulting in tunes that were definitely "punk" (and, as they hailed from outside the Hollywood punkgeoisie, made for an excellent warning shot signaling that the beaches and the suburbs were about to invade) but very much their own style. The tunes are often frenzied—remember, these guys were responsible for L.A.'s *other* claim to being the birthplace of hardcore, the "Xerox/No Compromise" medley on the b-side of their sole Dangerhouse single—and razor tight, but the vocals rarely register above annoyance in the outrage department, and the tempo and chord changes give the tunes a herky-jerky feel that is too-often nonexistent



with today's crowd of spiky-coiffed progeny. In addition to all the tracks from the aforementioned Dangerhouse single, one will also find one of the two tracks from the *When Men Were Men and Sheep Were Scared* compilation, their track from the *Hell Comes to Your House* compilation, the tracks from their sole album, tracks from a 1980 demo and, if you plop the second disc in your computer, some live footage of the band playing at Long Beach City College in 1979. Those who like their punk slightly off the beaten path would do well to buy this in bulk quantities, 'cause you're gonna wear the discs out fast. –Jimmy Alvarado (Nickel And Dime)

RIFF RANDELLS, THE: *Doublecross:* CD
This is so fucking awesome! Yay! Amazing girl vocals, awesome bubblegum goodiness! Reminds me of Nikki And The Corvettes, poppier Bobbyteens, even maybe the best Go Go's stuff! I love this CD! In a perfect world, "Traitor of the Heart" would be the hit single at the roller rink! Plus, how can you go wrong naming your band after the biggest Ramones fan in *Rock 'n' Roll High School*? Plus, they introduced me to the amazing Little Girls by covering their song, "Bandana." If this were a cereal, it'd be Corn Pops! If you don't buy this, you are dumb! –Maddy (Dirtnap)

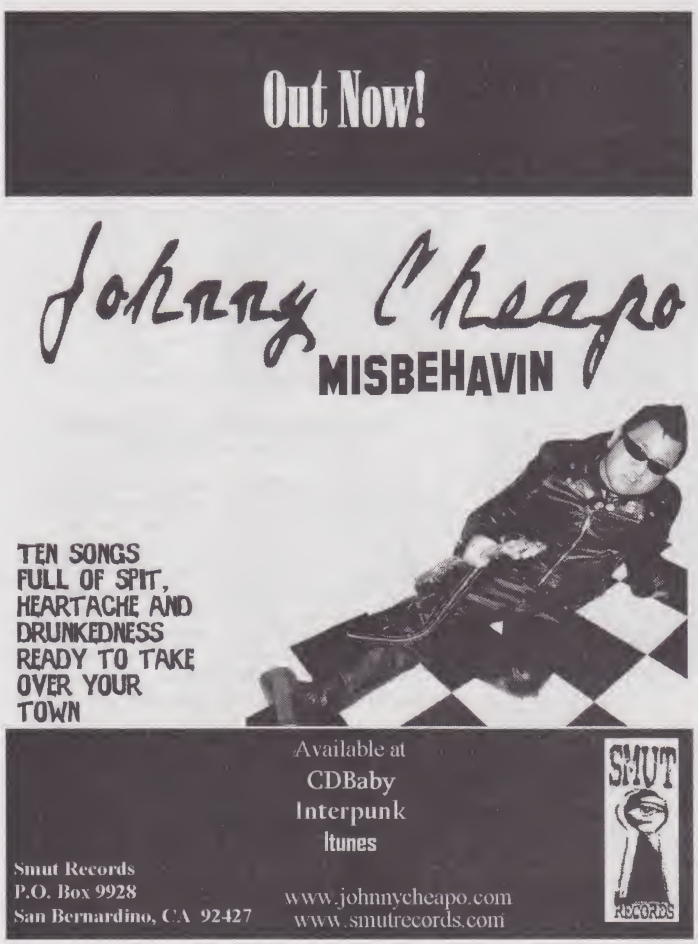
ROSS JOHNSON: *Make It Stop!:* CD
This is real life. Outsider artists make some killer music. Ross has been a Memphis cult legend for decades now. Goner, purveyors of all good things Memphis, put out this comp of his "most" from '79 to '06, a solid collection and a great CD book/confession written by Ross himself. Ross contains the usual underground genius many garage-it-yourself guys do, in the ramshackle vein of Hasil Adkins but with an uncanny tight sound—maybe because all kinds of talent played with him; Alex Chilton, The Gibson Bros, Jon Spencer, Tav Falco, Jim Dickenson, Peter Buck, Monsieur Jeffrey Evans—and that's just who is in the press release. You could cry thinking this music might have never been found, like the great songs The Cramps resurrected: true hobo poet moments over stomping music, as Ross just talks those lyrics out. Take the creeeeepy-cool "Wet Bar": "Honey why did you go away? Why did you take our wet bar? …So I got a drinking problem, what's new? Couldn't we work it out? Couldn't we have a drink or something?" Reality. –Speedway Randy (Goner)

SCOTT REYNOLDS & THE STEAMING BEAST: *Adventure Boy:* 2xCD
I really like this album. When I think of early '90s rock, I usually think of Nirvana and Pearl Jam, but whenever I see reruns of *Beavis and Butthead,* there are always videos of a bunch of also-ran college and alt rock bands. A lot of these bands definitely were quirky and unique sounding in a way that's just a little bit different from bands today. The Steaming Beast managed to snag all the good bits about the jangly and poppier sides of the alt rock spectrum (like the Flaming Lips and Urge Overkill), and avoid the crappier aspects (i.e. the pseudo adult contemporary kibble that is the Counting Crowes and Goo Goo Dolls). From what I understand, The Steaming Beast is really more of a concept than an actual band, sorta like Steely Dan, but the record holds together really well and has great lyrics which easily could of fit on records from Scott's most famous past band, All. This is really great chill music that keeps one's attention. Also, Scott provides really great liner notes in the CD. There's also a second CD included with this which is a pretty good label sampler of the Suburban Home roster. –Adrian (Suburban Home)

SHAPES, THE: *Songs for Sensible People:* CD
The Shapes are another criminally obscure band hailing from England who apparently left a lasting enough impression that someone cared about, as well as remembered, them so that this compendium of their recorded output could see the light of day, and the punk world is a much better place as a result. One of the architects of what later became "punk pathetique" (think Toy Dolls, Splodgenessabounds and the like), they married to some very silly subject matter (how silly? How do "Jennifer the Conifer," which is a love song to a tree, or "{I Saw} Batman {in the Laundrette}" strike you?) to the punk template and came up with catchy songs that weren't afraid to be just as flat-out funny as sound pissed off. Their "Wot's For Lunch, Mum (Not Beans Again!)" is a bonafide classic and its inclusion here is more than enough reason to pick this up and provide it with a properly reverential spot in the ol' collection. One more thing: the liner notes are a fuckin' riot: "The pressure of drink, women, and rock'n'roll debauchery totally failing to manifest in their lives began to affect the band badly….Dave began wearing a curly wig and false mustache, claiming that he was really Carlos Santana and that, therefore, he should get double helpings of 'eggs, beans and chips' when the band stopped off for a nosh…. Brian demanded that his knees be removed so that he could have the front of his legs paved. It was all getting too much…." –Jimmy Alvarado (Overground)

SHELLAC: *Excellent Italian Greyhound:* CD
First new record from the Chicago power trio since 2000. J Robbins stated he only liked the first four songs on this one. I like the whole thing. The rest of the record consists of a couple of instrumentals and a Bob Weston vocal. But if you're lookin' for fresh Albini—the first few songs are kick ass. "The End of Radio" is so true, so true. –Sean Koepenick (Touch & Go)

SHOREBIRDS: Self-titled: 7"EP
This has been a long-awaited release for me. When rumors regarding the break up of Latterman began circulating, my heart sunk down to the soles of my shoes. It jumped right back into my chest, however, when word of a new band being formed involving Matt Canino from Latterman and none other than Chris Bauermeister



from Jawbreaker began getting around. It stayed firmly planted there after the first listen of this record. This 7" is served up on clear gold, hand-labeled vinyl in sleeves of several different colors with two songs on each side. It doesn't sound as close to a Latterman record as I expected, but you can definitely pick up on the influence. These songs have a bit more of a simple structure with Matt as the only singer. "The People I Live with," first song side B, is the winner of this record. It will take some digging to find out where to get this, but some searching of Internet message boards eventually led me to an address that you can mail your four bucks to. Be sure to grab this before it's gone. –Dave Dillon (Self-released)

SHOREBIRDS: Self-titled: 7"EP
I don't think I'm alone in my affection for Big Drill Car, for punk that's poppy, but not it the super-obvious ways, where the guitar work sneaks up on you over time, and you realize that all the instruments (usually lead by the guitars), regardless of the lyrics, sound hopeful and swelling; then you also come to realize that the lyrics are thoughtful and meaningful. It's music which openly suggests that the listener can start believing in them. Shorebirds do exactly that. One song's made and sung along by David Hayes, a golden dude if there ever was one; the guy who helped form Lookout! and walked away from it clean when he saw the shit sandwich it would become (and look how right he was), and formed Very Small Records. This is fantastic. –Todd (Self-released)

SHOT BAKER / VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: *Vindictive Tribute Split* 7"
The Vindictives are perhaps the most under-appreciated of all 1990s pop punk bands. So, imagine my delight upon receiving this Vindictives tribute record! The problem with this sort of thing is that it just makes me want to put on a Vindictives record instead! Plus Joey Vindictive & Co. have got to be one of the hardest bands to cover—crazy Muppet-ish vocals, over-the-top energy and craziness, ack! I've heard Shot Baker are a decent band, but their covers of "Future Homemakers of America" and "Glad to Be" lack the insanity of the originals. Vacation Bible School cover "Assembly Line" and "Automatic," and get a little bit more of the Vindictives craziness, and rock, um, a little harder. That said, if I ever heard either of these bands (or, really, almost any other punk band) playing a Vindictives song at a show, I'd be jumping around like crazy! And I wholeheartedly salute the production of anything in homage to one of the best bands of all time! If this were a cereal, it'd be the revival (about ten years ago?) of Quisp, one of most amazing cereals ever! –Maddy (Underground Communiqué)

SHOT BAKER: *Time to Panic and Awake*: CDEP and CD
These guys are several heaping slices of great. The general sound is up-tempo, melodic punk with big choruses one has the urge to sing along to even when they don't know the actual words (which would probably result in enthusiastic mouthing along if one saw them live). The singer has one of those great low voices that sound pretty fuckin' forceful and epic, like Shawn Stern from Youth Brigade. In fact, *Time to Panic* and *Awake* sound like the great, lost, follow-up albums that Youth Brigade never really got around to making, albeit with a Chicago rather than California slant. These albums are actually re-releases, but the provenance gets a little complicated. *Awake* was Shot Baker's first proper full length and was originally released a few years ago with their first demo *Time to Panic* tacked on (for a demo, it's actually a really good release on its own, instead of just sounding like rough sketches of future songs). Unhappy with the original release of *Awake*, the band rerecorded the album, included a new song, and separated *Time to Panic*. Whoa, kinda like how Youth Brigade did the same thing twenty-five years earlier with their *Sound and Fury* album. Déjà vu! Anyway, check this shit out, for this music makes me happy. –Adrian (Underground Communiqué)

SKITSYSTEM: *Singles Collection*: CD
A reissue of three of their Distortion records EPs on one disc, which means you get to enjoy having your mind blown off your shoulders without having to stop and flip to the other side every few minutes. If you're unfamiliar with Skitsystem, they mine the same Discharge influence as many of their Swedish peers, drop the tuning down a couple of notes, and let fly with just the right amount of their own virulence added to the pudding. They remain one of the best hardcore bands from that area of the planet and this serves as a reminder that they've managed to remain consistently cool for more than a decade. –Jimmy Alvarado (Barbarian)

SLOWA WE KRWI: *Przebudzenie*: CD
Truly intriguing first release from this band from Poland. A feeling I get listening to the music is the weight of darkness with the hint of hope for light. Music that is heavy with an aggressive attack and yet there lies beneath the surface a pretty melody mixed in. A mixture of anarcho punk meets metallic crust. Female vocals that, I believe, are sung in Polish since it's their country of origin. English translations of the songs are provided. Her vocal delivery is screamed but is controlled and does not come off indecipherable, as far as I can tell. What I do know is that she sings with a feel that is genuine and passionate. Another thing that stands out is the interplay of the guitars and bass. At times, they are dead-on, pounding out riffs and, all of a sudden, the guitarist will just slip out a little bit, almost sounding out of key but adding a new dimension to the song. At other times, instead of just playing power bar chords, the person uses other strumming styles to add depth. Like any band, the drummer has to tie everything together. This band has that drummer that is solid and bangs out the beats to carry this group forward. This might take a little digging to find. But if what I describe entices you, the search will be rewarding. –Donofthedead (Tujaca Fala)

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Split 12"

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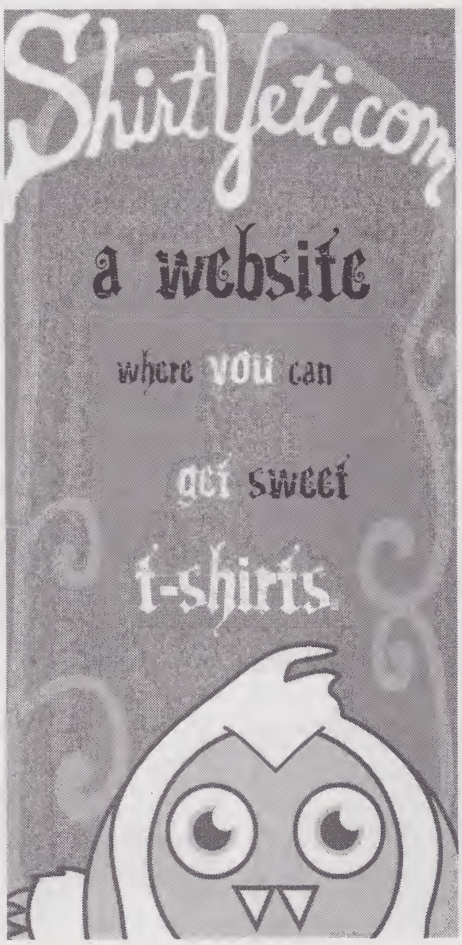

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SMALL ARMS DEALER:
***Patron Saint of Disappointment:* CD**
Some bands start big things, only to have waves of bands follow their path. This is a band that follows along the lines of the Gainesville hardcore sound, and doesn't come up short in the ass-kicking department. Small Arms Dealer makes some great music. There are times when I wonder if they kidnapped Panthro UK United 13 and forced the band to record for them, and I really think they would hold that as a high compliment. There is a Southern California pop punk influence mixed in (think traces of Descendents or older Ataris), but I was surprised to see they were from New York. Listening to the album, however, you get the feeling you've heard it all before, even though it's really good. It's derivative but occasionally better than its influences. Try it, you'll like it. –Will Kwiatkowski (Deep Elm)

SONGS FOR MOMS:
***The Worse It Gets the Better:* LP+CD**
Calming, aggressive, and accessible are words that can all be honestly used when discussing *The Worse It Gets the Better*. Songs For Moms contains three women who write beautiful, strong lyrics and sing them with their beautiful, strong voices, while playing acoustic instruments, beautifully and strongly. And while at times this album reminds me of Rumbleseat, or the Pogues, or even the theme song from *Sealab*, Songs For Moms always maintain ownership of the music with their uniqueness, honesty, attitude, and character. Even when hopeless romanticism is handed out in heavy doses, these songs tell a tale that's relatable and endearing. I have yet to play this album for someone who hasn't totally dug it. –Daryl (Starcleaner)

SPECIMENS, THE:
***The Quick and the Deaf:* CD**
In the tradition of fellow Australian bands like Rose Tattoo, AC/DC, The Saints, and Radio Birdman, these guys take the Detroit's bluesy, punked-up rock'n'roll template and just go to town with it, infusing it with enough swagger to blow the balls off a charging rhino at sixty paces. Collected here are two full-lengths and an EP, all of which are definitely above average for this particular pigeonhole, plus an interview with the band from an Australian radio show. Impressive stuff here, fo' sho'. –Jimmy Alvarado (Zodiac Killer)

SQUALORA: Self-titled: CD
The band's name is in this prickly font, as if when you simply think the name it's like having a sea urchin inside your head. The songs are the same—one wouldn't think that a tune titled "United We Slouch" would put such a sneer on one's pate, but oh my does it ever. On the whole, Squalora remind me lots and lots and lots of Nausea or Milwaukee crust punk bands from the early '90s. This is a good thing; my understanding is that sea urchins can be pretty tasty when you crack them open. So is this record. –The Lord Kveldulfr (Repetitively Futile)

TEENAGE BOTTLEROCKET:
***Warning Device:* CD**
Teenage Bottlerocket are one of the relatively few bands that stick very closely to the Lookout Records formula for pop punk that still keeps my interest peaked. I progressed through the early part of my teenage years without failing to acquire piles of records from Ramones and Screeching Weasel wannabe bands that now collect dust, but all of Teenage Bottlerocket's releases still get frequent plays from me. It will take some time before I can decide on whether or not this release tops *Total*, the full length prior to this one, but I'd say it's damn close. I'm not sure if I like Kody's (ex-Lillingtons) songs on this record more than on *Total*, but they aren't bad by any means. Ray, who has always been my favorite half of TBR's vocal section, puts out songs that are equal to or better than *Total's* content. The formula certainly does not fail on this record. –Dave Dillon (Red Scare, www.redscare.net)

TERRIBLE TWOS, *a + a:* 7"
Noisy, arty punk by Detroit folks from Piranhas and Clone Defects. I guess this is what the scenesters are calling "weird punk." It's about time someone came up with a name for it. It's not really garage, not really art punk, not really noise; that is what you get here. Anyone who is following this scene will love it. This copy is on purple vinyl. –Mike Frame (Big Neck)

TILTWHEEL / DOWN IN THE DUMPS: Split: 7"
I fucking love Tiltwheel! Awesome melodic punk rock from both bands battling on this record! Down In The Dumps are clearly influenced by the better No Idea releases. Gruff vocals, power chords, melodic punk rock! For fans of Off With Their Heads and the Chinese Telephones. Definitely in the mid-cereal tier range. (Apple Jacks?) Tiltwheel, of course, rules! If they were a cereal, they'd be Cracklin' Oat Bran, which I know sounds bad, but actually, it's kinda gritty, but/and (really, truly) totally awesome. More gruff, melodic amazing punk rock! Lots of songs about being depressed and drinking. If you like punk rock, buy this record. –Maddy (ADD)

TIM VERSION, THE:
***Decline of the Southern Gentleman:* LP**
This is one way I consider myself lucky: not taking The Tim Version for granted. Pound for pound, note for note, they're one of my favorite bands in existence. I'll be honest, I'm a busy dude, but when I was asked to write the one-sheet for this record and the liner notes for another collection within a week by two different people, it wasn't a question of doing it, it was a question of if I could do a good enough job. There's always the risk of douchebaggery writing how great a band is for the sole exercise of trying to convince people who've never heard of them to buy their record. Yet, I wanted to repay my debt to the band without the exchange of money. I've spent

hundreds of hours listening to, writing along to, and flat-out feeling that my day got better by listening to Tim Version records—all of them—from their two previous full-lengths, to their split with Super Chinchilla Rescue Mission, to the country-soaked *Floribraska* 10". They could wrap themselves up in so many cheap flags of easy identification, but they don't. They're, at their core, just great dudes who play in what I think is a largely overlooked band. And I don't think they care about that. They all work hard (bartender for a bar located in front of a trailer park, an insurance estimator, a self-employed Ebay/Yahoo-er, and a rocket scientist) and examine life, death, and the living dead. They're a band who are operating equally on the three levels: of heart (there's a ton of compassion, even in their disgust and dismay), head (listening to the album is one thing, listening to it while reading the lyrics, adds a novel-like dimension mixed with razor-sharp political commentary), and body (there's no denying that all of these guys can play their instruments in Hacksaw Jim Duggan / Bob Stinston ways, not Yngwie Malmsteen / Blues Hammer ways)). It all leads to one conclusion: one of the best records of 2008. –Todd (No Idea)

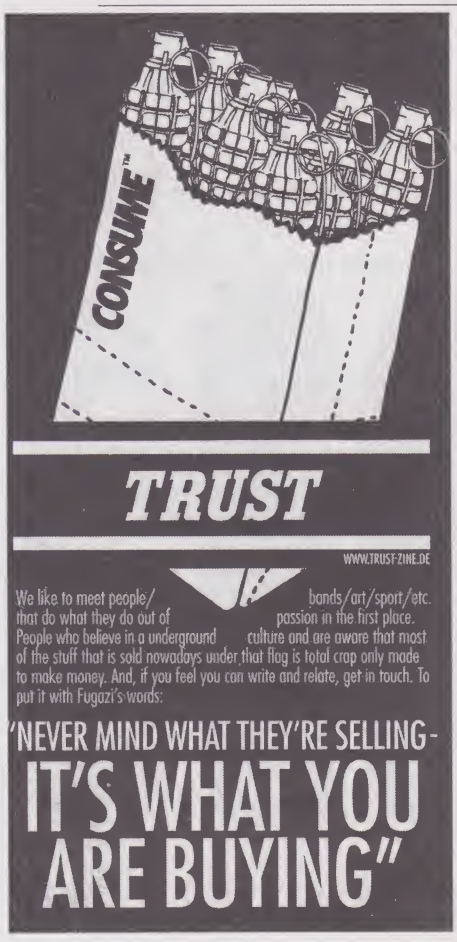
TOKYO NITES: Self-titled: 7"
There is something to be said for quick and out the door songs. Singer P. Fix was in the great Dirty Sweets, who exploded under two minutes each time. Tokyo Nites have some fun hooks, but man—four minutes just wipes out the fun. –Speedway Randy (Super Secret)

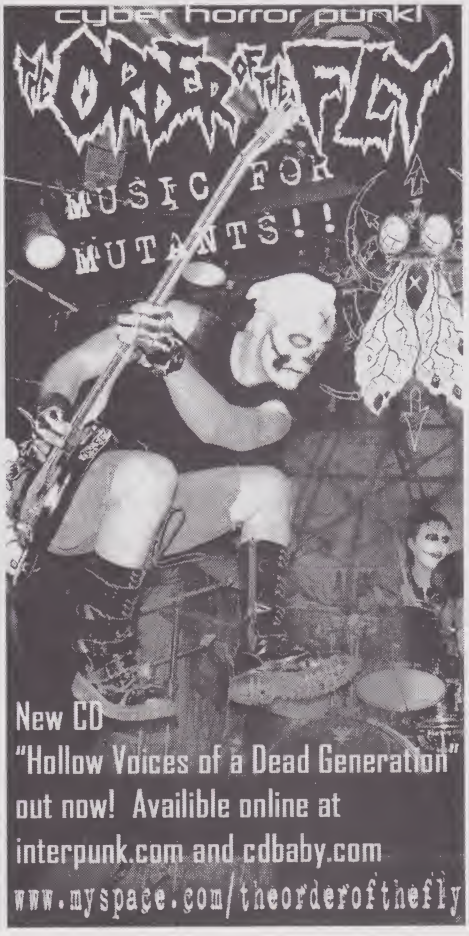
TROUBLEMAKE: *Feral:* CD-R
NOTE TO BANDS: Dude, *you guys.* Please do not tape stuff to the top of your CD-Rs. In the majority of CD players, this can often render said items unplayable, forcing the reviewer to write you an email and ask that you please send another one to *Razorcake* HQ, this time without taping band names or addresses to the top of the goddamn thing. Troublemake juuuust squeezed by in this matter, as all CD players I came across simply laughed at me when I tried to play *Feral*. However, the computer grudgingly accepted it. And here's what came out: Bittersweet and tinged with self-loathing, these guys play dirty pop punk with a nice, simple, melancholic early '90s feel, reminding me a *lot* of bands like the Larry Brrrds, The Kidz, and Jon Cougar Concentration Camp. Four songs, with only one of 'em topping the two-minute mark; back when Dead Beat was putting out J Church and Whatever records, they'd have been all over this band. As a listener, I'd suggest waiting to see with what they hit us with next (even as a demo, this one comes across a little rough-hewn), but they're definitely smacking me in the ear with the right kind of gloves. –Keith Rosson (Sam North)

UTOPIA: Self-titled: CD
This the second release this issue that I get something great from Poland! First thought that comes to mind is of their country mates Post Regiment mixed with La Fraction. This band's style is highly comparable to both. They're a female-fronted band that plays straight-forward melodic punk that is no bullshit and all fun with enthusiastic energy: vocals that are sung with a pretty tone but comes with some grit you can sink your teeth into; driving guitars that propel the music forward and takes you for a rip roaring ride; and drumming that drives the back beat that makes your heart pound. A great listen from start to finish make this a great candidate for repeated listens. Now if I could read the Polish language, I could figure out what was being sung and what the song titles are. Regardless, I know now that I have found a new favorite band to add to the list. –Donofthedead (Trujaca Fala)

VAPID: *Do the Earthquake:* 7"
This female-fronted Vancouver, B.C. band make this shit that's playful, urgent, snotty, and super rad. Their sound is rather reminiscent of early riot grrrl and grunge on a punk tip. Because I can't even pogo rhythmically, I typically don't like songs suggesting that I do a dance—I still can't walk like an Egyptian. But I find here the exception to the rule. The title track is total fun. I was spazzin' out before the chorus even hit. The two tracks on the other side are just as good, if not better. Here's the rub: only 312 of 'em were made. –Vincent (Nominal)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Insubordination Fest 2007:* CD / DVD
While nothing can quite compare to the incredible experience of attending the second pop punk festival hosted in Baltimore by Insubordination Records, this twenty-seven (that's right, the magic number of pop punk) track set does its best. Nearly thirty bands from four different countries played, running the gamut from classic figureheads of the scene such as the Mr. T Experience, Beatnik Termites, Ben Weasel, Wimpy Rutherford, and The Parasites, to rising stars such as Teenage Bottlerocket, The Ergs!, and The Steinways. The audio on the CD does a good job of capturing the live feel of the weekend while still having better quality than many live recordings. The DVD portion has both clean audio and video while also showing the view of the show from the back of the room as well from the stage. Due to the blackout that occurred on the first night, Egghead and Dear Landlord performed an impromptu basement show and were not able to have their sets recorded. This compilation serves as both excellent documentation of the weekend and as proof that pop punk is stronger than ever these days. Nothing can capture the heat, the dancing, the excitement, the bar-b-cue fare prepared by Baltimore's own Sick Sick Birds, or the other aspects of this festival that will be stuck in the minds of myself and its other attendees forever, but this collection is as close as you can get. –Dave Dillon (Insubordination)





VARIOUS ARTISTS:
***Wild News to Crash Your i-Pod:* CD**
Dave "Kong" Kingman was known for having a low batting average but being able to crush massive home runs. Dude once got a pop up stuck in the roof of the Metrodome. Another fly ball hit a speaker in the Kingdome. The rest of the time he struck out. Kong was feast or famine. *Wild News*, a label sampler from France's Lollipop Records, has a similar dynamic; judge this disc by the ratio of good to marginal (nine for nineteen) and you're missing the picture. *Wild News* opens with a hit parade of pop and punk jaw droppers. Gasolheads lead off with "Hate Is Better than Rock'n'Roll"—the catchiness of early G.G. Allin coupled with the attitude of latter G.G., all, thankfully, free of fecal matter. The Manikins' "High School Good Boy" is a long lost dose of Dickies' gold. Powersolo's "Action" has that ridiculous good time feel that the world's been missing ever since Madness passed their peak. Toss in an album cut from the Briefs and we've got a sequence of four killer cuts to open the compilation. The best of the rest includes mix-worthy songs from Dead Brothers, Les Hatepinks, Petit Vodo, and the Aggravation. New bands, great songs; this is everything a compilation should be. –Mike Faloon (Lollipop)

VIOLENT ARREST: Self-titled: CD
Fucking good raging hardcore here! This band is from the U.K. and, given the accent, later period Voorhees comes immediately to mind. Around the time of their split LP with Out Cold, another good reference point here. Apparently, there are members of Ripcord and Heresy here, but this is much more straightforward than I remember those bands being. This is simply killer HC off the Negative Approach/Minor Threat/Early Boston tree. This is exactly the kind of hardcore I love and can never get enough of. Once again, the old timers take the young'uns to school on how to play raging original style hardcore. –Mike Frame (Deranged)

WAGNER LOGIC, THE:
***Easiest to Grab:* CD**
Apparently Alaska has its own homegrown alt-rock scourge. –Jimmy Alvarado (Wilderhood)

WAR OF WORDS: *Violence / War:* 7"
Fun, inventive, melodic hardcore from Boston. Reminds me an awful lot of Strung Out in terms of how the chords progress and how the vocals are handled, but with less production value (a very good thing). This is a great little record and it puffs me full of vigor and savagery every time I hear it. There's an acoustic track closing the b-side that's dripping with melancholy and I don't play it as often, but the other tunes stand me up and get me shouting. –The Lord Kveldulfr (Slab-O-Wax)

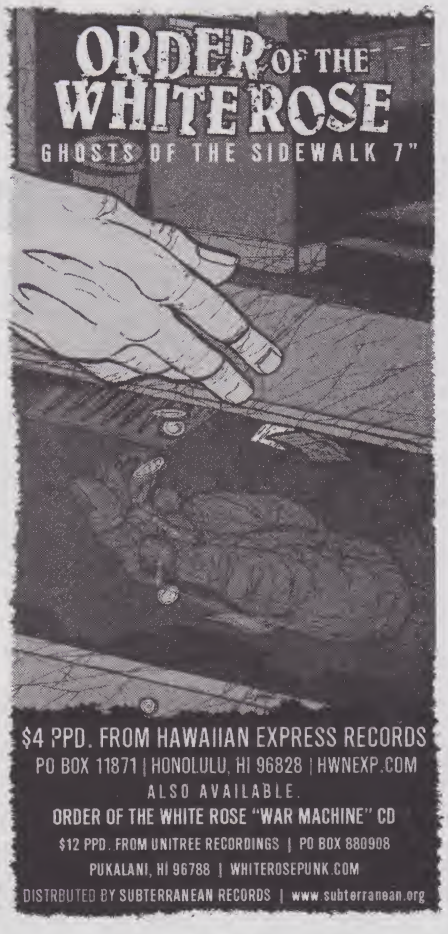
WHITE YORK: *Changing the Wheel:* 7"
"Changing the record" is much more accurate, thank you. –Jimmy Alvarado (White York)

WITCHES WITH DICKS:
***American Railroads:* 7" EP**
At the risk of sounding like a total hypocrite, here goes. Witches With Dicks, with *American Railroads* and their full-length, *Manual*, owe a great deal to the Dillinger Four collection, *This Shit Is Genius*. But, by whatever alchemy of time, space, and acoustics, they have created a companion piece, nigh over a decade later, that rocks just as hard, and without qualifier. I mean, sakes alive, there are riff-by-riff duplicated chord progressions, coupled with Paddy-toned singing, and it—amazingly because stuff like this usually bums me out—doesn't bother me in the slightest because Witches With Dicks seem to have come to the same musical conclusions as D4-at-that-time. They actually add to what seemed like a finite catalog. And that's important: ending up at the same place musically is a much more genuine approach than merely mirroring—or pantomiming—an influential band's "hot licks," "killer breakdowns," or "awesome guitar sound." Yeah, WWD broke up. It even says it on the repress of this 7". They had "space shuttle" potential, my friend. Blew up when they were really taking off. Too bad. –Todd (Shock To The System / Kiss of Death)

YOUNG LIVERS: *The New Drop Era:* CD
I want to like these guys more than I really do. They have that passionate, Hot Water Music thing going on—it sounds like they're playing their asses off, and they're probably onto some deep shit—but I just never catch myself with the urge to throw this on. I think part of my problem with this band, and Hot Water Music for that matter, is that I never really understand what their lyrics are about. Bands can be as obscure or transparent with their lyrics as they want, but sometimes I feel like I'm listening to a million metaphors about desperation that I don't quite get or relate to. –Adrian (Kiss of Death/ No Idea)

ZOMBIE GHOST TRAIN:
***Dealing the Death Card:* CD**
Too many band names suck. There's no excuse for it. I bet you can come up with a half dozen good band names right now. All you have to do is put a bunch of cool words together, words like zombie, ghost, and train. How about Death Urine Communist? Maybe Zig Zag Dirty Wang? Anyway, these guys have a cool name, but it's more horror-themed rockabilly. I love horror, but why is it so frequently combined with a form of music that doesn't sound particularly horrific? It makes no sense to me. There's a reason why there are so few science fiction country western songs. It's because country western doesn't sound very science fictiony. Now country horror: that would be some cool shit. Maybe if a couple of these horrorbilly bands branched out, they could do something really cool, instead of playing the same old songs over and over. –MP Johnson (SOS)

Many more reviews can be found at www.razorcake.org. There's so fuckin' many.



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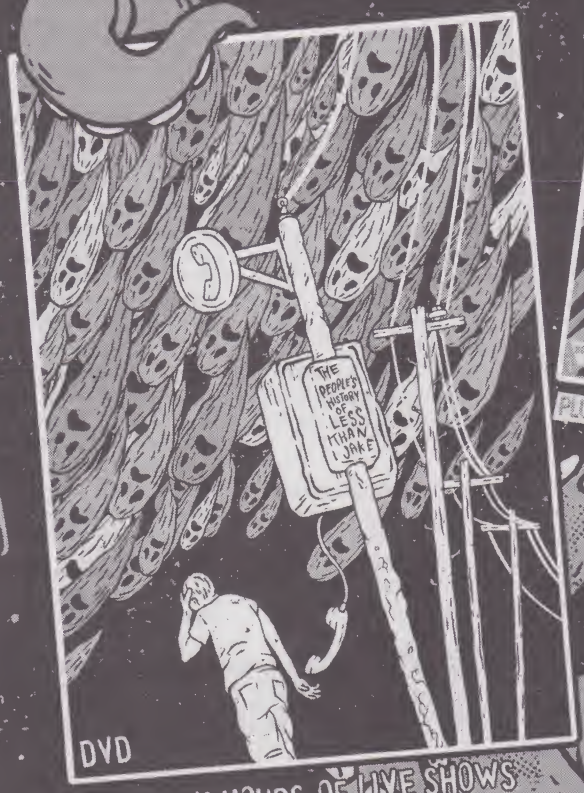

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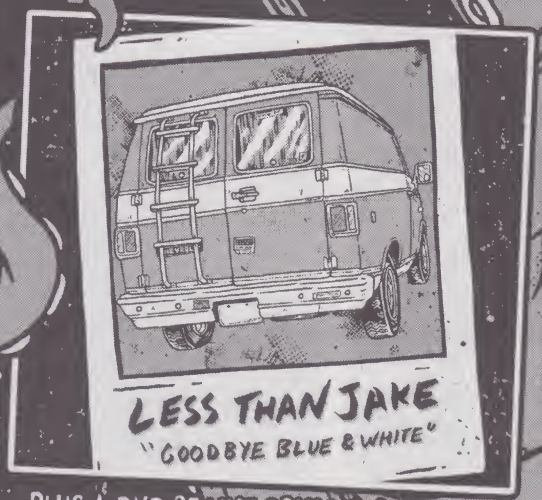

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to bands and labels that were reviewed either in this issue or to be posted on www.razorcake.org in the next couple months.

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• **679 Recordings Limited**, Electric Lightning Station, 46 Kensington Court, London W8 5DA, England
• **AARBR**, 59 Canning Rd., Croydon, Surrey, CRO 6QF, UK
• **Accident Prone**, PO Box 15087, Portland, OR 97293
• **ADD**, PO Box 8240, Tampa, FL 33674
• **Afternoon**, 222 W. 25th St., Minneapolis, MN 55404
• **Anatomic Bomb**, 2494 Brucetown Rd., Clearbrook, VA 22624
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• **Asian Man**, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030
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• **Badman**; 4110 SE Hawthorne #211, Portland OR 97214
• **Barbarian**, 254 West Gilman, Madison, WI 53703
• **Bat Skates**, PO Box 4233, Long Beach, CA 4233
• **Big Brown Shark**, 300 N. Brighton, Kansas City, MO 64123
• **Big Neck**, PO Box 8144, Reston, VA 20195
• **Bloodreds**, PO Box 3067, Albany, NY 12203
• **Bloodtown**, PO Box 22083, Oakland, CA 94623
• **Boom Chick**, 6405 Morrill Ave., Lincoln, NE 68507
• **Boulevard Trash**, 46 Dunstall Crescent, Toronto, Ontario, M1E 3M4, Canada
• **Bridge 9**, 119 Foster St., Building 4 Suite 3, Peabody, MA 01960
• **Burrito**, PO Box 3204, Brandon, FL 33509-3204
• **Cabana 1**, 315 S. Coast Hwy 101, Suite U-195, Encintas, CA, 92024
• **Captain Oi**, PO Box 501, High Wycombe, Bucks HP10 8QA, UK
• **Cargo UK**, 17 Heathmans Rd., London, SW6 4TJ, England
• **Cat'n'Cake**, 20 Poyntz Rd., Overton, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG25 3HD, England
• **Chainsaw Safety**, PO Box 260318, Bellerose, NY 11426
• **Churchkey**, PO Box 826, Durham, NC 27702
• **Combat Rock**, PO Box 65, 11101 Riihimäki, Finland
• **Crimes Against Humanity**, PO Box 142, Eau Claire, WI 54072
• **Criminal IQ**, 3501 N Southport, Chicago, IL 60657
• **Cult Jam**, PO Box 19, Gloucester, GL3 4YA UK
• **Cuntifiers**, c/o Greg Pettix, 4005 S.E. 31st. Ave., Portland, OR 97202
• **Dammit** Man, 24 Circular Ave. #1B, Bridgeport, CT 06605
• **Dead And Gone**, 17 Driver St., Sheffield, S13 9WP UK
• **Deadbeat**, PO Box 361392, Cleveland, OH 44136
• **Deadend**, PO Box 391, North Lombard, Portland, OR 97203
• **Deep Elm**, PO Box 5260, Clover, SC 29710
• **Der Todesking**, 5001 Forest, Kansas City, MO 64110
• **Deranged**, 2700 Lower Rd., Roberts Creek, BC, V0N 2W4, Canada
• **Die Slaughterhaus**, PO Box 160168, Atlanta, GA 30316
• **Dirt Cult**, 713 Stagecoach Dr., Las Cruces, NM 88011
• **Dirtnap**, 2615 SE Clinton St., Portland, OR 97202
• **Don Giovanni**, PO Box 628 Kingston, NJ 08528
• **Dr. Strange**, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma CA 91701
• **Electric Mayhem**, PO Box 3067, Albany, NY 12208
• **Emancypunx**, PO Box 145, 02-792 Warszawa 78, Poland
• **Escape Artist**, PO Box 472, Downington, PA 19335
• **Exigent**, PO Box 24, Kaysville, UT 84037
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• **Fat**, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119
• **Feral Kid**, 29 Cluster St., Buffalo, NY 14214
• **Fivecore**, 2111 S. Trenton Way Suite #105, Denver, CO 80231
• **Flying Saucer**, PO Box 2375 Terminal Station, Vancouver, BC V6B 3W7 Canada
• **French Fan Club**, 7858 Cantaloupe Ave., Panorama City, CA 91402-6202
• **Get Hip**, PO Box 666, Canonsburg PA15317
• **Get Outta Town**, PO Box 4094, Winter Park, FL 32793-4094
• **Going Underground**, 1822 G St., Bakersfield, CA 93301
• **Havoc**, PO Box 8585, Minneapolis, MN 55408
• **Hazard Hill**, 1005 W. State Rd. 84 #117, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315
• **Hazzard**, 1941 Harding St., Clearwater, FL 33765
• **High School Reject**, Berlagewag 12, 9731 LN Groningen, Netherlands
• **Highlark**, 112 Rockne St., Staten Islan, NY 10314
• **Hook or Crook**, 360 Grand Ave. #148, Oakland, CA 94610-4840
• **Humdinger**, 38 Mulberry St., Asheville, NC 28804
• **I Hate Punk Rock**, PO Box 1234, St. Louis, MO 63010
• **In the Red**, PO Box 50777, LA, CA 90050
• **Insubordination**, PO Box 2846, Columbia, MD 21045
• **Insurgence**, 2 Bloor St. W., Suite 100-184, Toronto Ontario, M4W 3E2 Canada
• **It's Alive**, 11411 Hewes St., Orange, CA 92869
• **Jade Tree**, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810
• **Johann's Face**, PO Box 479164, Chicago, IL 60647
• **Jonny Cat**, PO Box 82428, Portland, OR 97282
• **Joyful Noise**; PO Box 20109, Indianapolis, IN 46220
• **K**, PO Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507
• **Kids On Fire**, 6020 Carlsbad Ave., Saint Louis, MO 63116
• **Kiss of Death**, PO Box 75550, Tampa, FL 33675
• **La-Ti-Da**, 2314 Richmond Rd., Victoria, BC V8R-4R8, Canada
• **Learning Curve**, PO Box 183778, Minneapolis, MN 55418
• **Lets Pretend**, PO Box 1663, Bloomington, IN 47402
• **Level Plane**, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22907
• **Livid**, PO Box 276132, Boca Raton, FL 33427
• **Lollipop**, 2 Blvd. Theodore Thurner, 13006 Marseille, France
• **Longshot**, PMB #72, 302 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11211
• **Loud Blaring Punk Rock**, PO Box 3067, Albany, NY 12208
• **Lujo**, 3209 Jennie Dr., Morgan City, LA 70380
• **Mint**, PO Box 3613, Vancouver, BC, V6B 3Y6 Canada
• **Mortville**, PO Box 4263, Austin, TX 78765
• **Mother Box**,12 Madison St., Lynbrook, NY 11563
• **New West**, 608 W. Monroe St. Suite C, Austin, TX 78704
• **Nickel and Dime**, PO Box 555712, LA, CA 90055
• **No Front Teeth**, PO Box 27070, London N2 9ZP England
• **No Idea**, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604
• **Nominal**, 726 Richards St., Vancouver, BC V6B 3A4 Canada
• **One Percent Press**, PO Box 315, Wilder, VT 05088
• **Organized Crime**, PO Box 213, Brookfield, IL 60513
• **Overground**, PO Box 1NW, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE99 1NW, UK
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• **Shorebirds**, 315 Steele St. NE, Olympia, WA 98506
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• **Skybucket**, 2783 BM Montgomery St., Birmingham, AL 35209
• **Slab-O-Wax**, PO Box 461082, San Antonio, TX 78246
• **Snuffy Smiles**, 12-A Kamikousaicho, Shichiku Kita-ku Kyoto 603-8117 Japan
• **Social Treason**, PO Box 12262, Huntsville, AL 35815-2262
• **Sooooo Intense**, 1207 E. Flora St., Tampa, FL 33604
• **SOS**, PO Box 3017, Corona, CA 92878-3017
• **Southkore**, 2814 South Spaulding Ave., Chicago, IL 60623
• **Spent Planet**, Limited, c/o Matt, 96 Bullfinch Rd., Lynn, MA 01902
• **Starcleaner**, 1020 Bushwick Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11221
• **State of Mind**, PO Box 351, Port Jefferson, NY 11777
• **Steel Cage**, PO Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125
• **Suburban Home**, PO Box 40757, Denver, CO 80204
• **Sunken Treasure**, 2648 Deming Ave., Columbus OH 43202
• **Super Secret**, PO Box 1585, Austin, TX 78767
• **Swami**, PO Box 620428, San Diego, CA 92162
• **Talking House**, 1160 Bryant St., SF, CA 94103-4335
• **Team Science**, 1702 Highland Glen, Pearland, TX 77581
• **Thrillhouse**, PO Box 460207, San Francisco, CA 94146
• **Tic Tac Totally**, PO Box 558383, Chicago, IL 60655-8383
• **TKO**, 8941 Atlanta Ave., #505 Huntington Beach, CA 92646
• **Touch & Go**, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625
• **Trigger On The Dutendoo**, 308 E. Bowen St., Oshkosh, WI 54901
• **Trujaca Fala**, PO Box 13, 81 806 Sopot 6, Poland
• **Two Sheds Music**, PO Box 5455, Atlanta, GA 31107
• **Underground Communiqué**, 1220 W. Hood Ave #2, Chicago, IL 60660
• **VIP**, PO Box 5824, Atlanta, GA 31107
• **Voodoo Rhythm**, Jurastrasse 15, 3013 Bern, Switzerland
• **Warbird**, 165 Courtland St., Suite A-213, Atlanta, GA 30303
• **White York**, 99 Custer St., Buffalo, NY 14214
• **Whoa Oh**, 21-36 43rd St., Astoria, NY 11105
• **Wilderhood**, PO Box 1076, Kasilof, AK 99610
• **Yosada**, PO Box 15404, Boise, ID 83715
• **Yo-Yo**, PO Box 920105, Berlin, Germany
• **Zodiac Killer**, 1733 Iron Mountain Rd., Cheyenne, WY 82009

ZINE REVIEWS

Send all zines for review to:
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"This dude's a great writer: mixing honesty, joy, acute self-loathing, and confusion all in one imminently readable, big-ringed package."
–Keith Rosson
Puddn'head #4

99MM ZINE, $?, no trades, limited to 50, 8" x 5 ½", silk-screened, 16 pgs.
Sometimes, aesthetics are a lexicon in and of themselves. This zine has no immediate narrative, but the way it's put together speaks volumes: silk-screened, folded, multiple inks, zig-zag sewing machined spine, with graffiti- and found-art-heavy graphics. It's halfway between an adult picture book and an image-poem. For me, it's all about what the artwork triggers, like little alleys that you stop and look at for just one second more for some reason that you can't put your finger on. –Todd (No address.)

AVOW #22, $2, 5 ½" x 8", photocopied, 36 pgs.
I don't want to encourage any more doom upon Keith, but part of me has to admit that some of his most powerful writing comes with the revisiting, stewing in, and examining some pretty dire shit in his life. This issue subtitled "Everything in Ruins! (Hooray!)" is pretty much a rollercoaster ride through bummerville (along with a very funny bit equating the new Tim Armstrong album as porn, even sandwiching the record between Burial and Career Suicide, like it was a double dong between two packages of condoms). The story that struck me the strongest follows a young Keith in the back of a rusted-up car in the Northwestern drizzle. In the front seat are his mother and Keith's Mother's Bad Choice Boyfriend. The boyfriend is getting drunk, driving them around to pick up another friend. Not to give away the whole story, but young Keith stands up to the boyfriend and is struck down, and young Keith takes it, smoldering in the inability to protect his mother. What I appreciate about *Avow*, is that even when Keith's getting beat the fuck up (emotionally, mostly), he's still clawing to become a better person, to not dissolve, and to hoist his humanity up to his ideals, even if he's falling short of his own expectations. And that's a powerful testament, no matter what the medium. –Todd (Keith Rosson, 1615 SE Main St., Portland, OR 97214)

BITCH #38, $5.95, full size, offset w / glossy cover, 96 pgs.
Huh. I thought this magazine went down with some of its contemporaries like *Punk Planet* a while back, but it's still here, spewing out liberal bullshit and griping about TV characters. It's really hard for me to give a shit about the way beauty pageant contestants are portrayed, what Democrats are doing to win gay voters, the way wimmin who work on Wall Street are stereotyped, or how totally airbrushed the models in that make-up ad looked because all of the concepts behind beauty pageants, voting, the stock market, and make-up ads are totally fucked. What do they expect instead: An *empowering* beauty pageant? Barefaced *make-up* models? An article about what Democrats are doing to *abolish* the voting system? The tagline for this magazine is "A Feminist Response to Pop Culture." For the wimmin represented here, it's apparent that their response is not to create a culture outside of the mainstream that they feel oppressed by, but rather to make snarky comments and skin-deep insight about pop culture. Like that's going to change anything. –Lauren Trout (B-Word Worldwide, 4930 NE 29th Ave., Portland, OR 97211)

BRAINS Vol. 2, $?, 5 ½" x 8 ½"
This is the second offering of the punks versus zombies fiction zine. A zine in which punks fight zombies. That should be all the information that I need give you, right? I mean, really. It's as good as it sounds, too. But I'll give you a little more info, because that's kind of my job. It's funny, fairly lengthy, it brings some pretty original concepts into the zombie genre, has some fun punk in-jokes, and some badass illustrations. Now quit fucking around and order this. –Craven Rock (Prisoners write to: Mishap Publishing, Box 5841, Eugene, OR 97405, Others: Microcosm Publishing, PO Box 1432, Portland, OR 97293, email: www.myspace.com/brainszine)

CITY TRASH #29, $?, 5 ¾" x 8 ½" Xeroxed, 36 pgs.
My favorite kind of zine is one that makes you take the issue with you to the computer to look up some of the bands you just read about. Back in the day, I'd probably go to No Idea's distro and order a couple CDs, but times are tight, so now I'm sticking with MP3-hunting for the sample songs. Halfway through reading *City Trash*, I got so curious about some of the bands mentioned. I decided to go check some of them out. Interviews and praise of Live Fast Die, The Shirley MacLaines, Digital Leather, and plenty of mentions of Jay Reatard got me excited about the whole bunch. And really, what more can you ask of a zine? Sure, the writing isn't perfect and the interviews are kind of lacking, but it's all right. If you dig the Central European garage rock scene and/or run-on sentences and lack of punctuation (this thing has plenty), this is it right here. –Will Kwiatkowski (Mark Kuurman, Biezenveld 48, 7943 Mc Meppel, Holland)

DRUNKEN MASTER #10, $4, 6" x 9", offset, color cover, 60 pgs.
Equally a collection of comics, straight-ahead great graphic art, a love of martial arts, and music-related shenanigans, it's all in the style with which Kiyoshi approaches *Drunken Master* that makes it so readable. I also very much enjoy *Drunken Master* because it creates its own small alternative universe. Kiyoshi, in many ways, reminds me of my brother who's in the Special Forces. I know he's a badass and yet, when you see him, he's totally unassuming, a little geeky (in a great way), and is a very warm person. And so follows *Drunken Master*. When Kiyoshi gives tips on protecting yourself in a street fight, it's very pragmatic stuff on how to get out of it as unharmed as possible (like throwing up—on you or them—or soiling yourself). There are also pieces on the fighters with the most fucked-up cauliflower ears and an interview with a band of musical ninjas, so it's definitely not your "typical zine fair," and that's a good thing. Just as Bruce Lee was only 135 lbs., you'll be astounded to how much wallop is packed in a mere sixty pages of *Drunken Master*. Tight kung-fu. –Todd (drunkenmasterzine@sbcglobal.net)

EAVES OF ASS #6: The Music Issue, $?, 5 ½" x 8", photocopied, 38 pgs.
Craven Rock explores a theme in The Music Issue that he discovered along the way of writing it: if you define yourself, even partially, by the music you listen to, an almost inescapable element to how you process music is dependent on where you're from. This starts from the home (Was music played in the home? Did your parents play instruments? Were they religious?), but also from larger geography (in Craven's instance, a "transplant hick" in Gary, Indiana). By examining this through a series of short stories and reminisces, Craven gets to some self-surprising roots: of what music he'll defend to the end, and what to let go of. I find this type of stuff fascinating. This issue is so focused on the central theme of music that instead of narrowing down to a pinpoint, it ultimately, becomes much larger. It's an examination of the definition self, and one well worth reading. –Todd (Craven Rock, 1627 16th St., Oakland, CA 94607)

FRESH BREATH OF MINT!, #3, Free, 5 ½ x 8 ½, newsprint, 64 pgs.
Connected to Vancouver record label, Mint Records, *Fresh Breath of Mint!* is a nicely produced and enjoyable publication. Crucial to the zine's third issue is its tribute to Nardwuar, which nearly overruns the entire issue. Sure, there are record store and DVD reviews, Carolyn Mark's tour diary, and a few other non-Human Serviette related pieces, but nothing can top the Nardwuar content. Central to this issue of the publication is Nardwuar's interview with Nirvana, which can make even a mild-mannered reader like myself want to reach back in time and punch Krist Novoselic.

Dude needs a sense of humor. The tributes to Nardwuar were endearing and Andrew Pearson's interview with the man in plaid was informative. The pièce de résistance, though, is the Nardwuar paper doll. –Liz Ohanesian (Mint Records, PO Box 3613, Vancouver, BC, Canada, V68 3Y6)

GREASESPOT #4, $?, 5 ½" x 8", photocopied, 50 pgs.
There's no denying that *Greasespot* has its heart in the right place. It's a zine that's collects several contributors' stories, comics, and information; it's put together with what's obviously a lot of love and playfulness. It's also regional, dealing with a particular area of Texas. I enjoyed the read: Something struck me with the zine, though. It would do it a world of good if more of the pieces took a step back and said this (in spirit): "Hello. My name is _____. (be nice; give a handshake to the reader) I live _____. (setting) Here is some background on me or what I'm about to launch into _____. (Like a couple of sentences.)" Because what happens for people who aren't in their group of friends, aren't from their part of the country, and aren't roughly in their age group is that they don't get much assistance in getting a foot hold in many of the stories that are told. Actually, the reader seems to be secondary to them getting something off of their chests. To me, a person who reads everything from cereal boxes to Solzhenitsyn, this zine has a lot of _____s in it, and if *Greasespot* took time to think that not everyone picking this up knew them already, it would improve with that in consideration. –Todd (1445 Still Glade Ln., Kingwood, TX 77345)

LAZY BOY #1, $2, free to prisoners, quarter size, photocopied, 36 pgs.
Between the pink covers of his zine are Mike's well-written anecdotes about the guys he's gotten it on with. While recounting each experience, he explains the context of what's going on in his life and describes the atmosphere a bit, so when sex inevitably comes up, it seems like a natural progression of the story. This is only the second gay erotica zine that I've ever read, probably because I have never actively sought out such literature. Reading about other peoples' sexual experiences in graphic detail kinda creeps me out. It was cool that most sexual encounters were in seedy theaters or foreign countries and that the words "fuck," "cum," "erection," and "jizz" were used on almost every page, because that's totally different from the way that the literature that I've been exposed to usually portrays sex. –Lauren Trout (Mike, PO Box 1174, Tallahassee, FL 32302-1174)

MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL #296, $4, full size, offset newsprint, 100 pgs.
With its cover torn to shreds as usual, *MRR* came to haunt me again this month. Last time around, I was supposed to review *MRR* #294. But George Tabb's column about being a judge for a stripper pageant made me view *MRR* in a negative light for printing it, so I didn't feel like I could give a fair review to the zine as a whole. If you don't read *MRR* regularly, this particular column detailed the physical features of ladies who were competing to be the host of a new porn channel, described how the author got off on looking at, and talking to, the women, then dismissed them as a bunch of fake, plastic bimbos in the end. I don't know if the old-timers at *MRR* still think it's punk to be offensive or if the readers just don't mind blatant sexism or what, but I thought it was fucked up and I didn't feel like reading the rest of the issue. Anyway, I decided to give this month's issue a chance and this time, it's Mykel Board talking up his sexual exploits with young boys and girls. Luckily, some badass columns by Matt Bernstein Sycamore, Cindy Crabb, and Jessica Mills had more relevant subject matter. Erika Ransom's column centered on Christmas and a father whose death she isn't exactly mourning was definitely the standout piece of the whole zine. The rest is made up of reprinted news stories that are peripherally related to punk, band interviews, and record reviews; none of which really caught my interest. I'm not really into talking shit or collecting records, so I felt like I just didn't "get" *MRR*, and I'm okay with that. –Lauren Trout (MRR, PO Box 460760, San Francisco, CA 94146-0760)

MONSTER OF FUN! Vol.1, $?, 5 ½" x 8", hand-sewn color paper cover, 70 pgs.
Although it may seem disingenuous for the editor of *Razorcake* to review not only a zine by one of our contributors, but a zine that reprints all of her columns over a span of time, the short answer to that criticism is, uhmm, go fuck yourself. I like to think of Razorcake as a family; with long-timers, it's not a "writer vs. editor" relationship or a "study in journalism," but an ongoing conversation about creativity. Many of us are friends based on mutual admiration for what one another does. And what Amy does is considerable. Not only is the writing in her pieces instantly likeable and full of adventure (she goes to China and volunteers to teach over a thousand students English), she's a considerable force as a graphic designer and illustrator, as this zine attests to: clean, bold layout, graphics that reproduce crisply on a photocopier, and hand-made details that reclaim, if only for the time you're holding it, tactile zines back from the cold, binary world of blogs. Sanks, Amy! –Todd (She's moving to Bangladesh, so here's her email: amyadoyzie@gmail.com)

PUDD'NHEAD #4, $4, 5½" x 8½", copied / ringbound, 129 pgs.
This dude's a great writer: mixing honesty, joy, acute self-loathing, and confusion all in one imminently readable, big-ringed package. I mean, *Pudd'nhead* #4 offers pretty much no graphics at all throughout it's nearly 130 pages (apart from snippets of Mike's totally illegible journals), and I still stayed up way later than I should have and read the whole thing in one sitting. Chronicling a heartbreak and subsequent decision to get the fuck of out Minneapolis for a while, the zine follows him through a variety of states (mental and geographical) as he tries like hell to find some kind of purpose or direction or closure against what made him leave town in the first place. During his travels, he stays at a lot of punk houses, tries to convince a lot of Starbucks employees to unionize, gets sick, gets drunk, reads, drives, feels connected, feels disconnected and, ultimately, does a hell of a job laying it all down on paper. It's one of those zines that strikes you with both its upfront, honest tone and the total likeability of its author. I mean, shit, it's obviously a good read: I'd let this dude *and* his dog stay at my house, and I don't even like dogs. Check it out. –Keith Rosson (Mike Pudd'nhead, PO Box 7458, Minneapolis, MN 55407)

RESIST #46, $3, 5 ½" x 8 ½", 82 pgs.
Let's just go right to the source for this one with a passage: "I went up to the counter get us something to eat. I saw that there were two cookies left in the case, so I told the guy behind the counter, 'I'll take those two cookies and a large coffee with enough water so I can drink it fast.' 'I've got two warm cookies left' he said. He'd been putting cookies on a cookie sheet when I walked up. 'One peanut butter and one ginger.' Actually, I don't remember if they were peanut butter and ginger." I hate to leave you hanging, but in order to find out more about Matte Resist's gripping three-hundred-word coffee and cookie purchase and other agonizingly detailed personal narratives, you'll have to order the zine. –Craven Rock (Bicycle Lane Industries, PO Box 582345, Minneapolis, MN 55458)

"Gripping three-hundred-word coffee and cookie purchase and other agonizingly detailed personal narratives."
–Craven Rock, *Resist #46*

RUM LAD #3, £1, 5 ½" x 8", offset, 38 pgs.
Steve Larder is a hell of an illustrator; one of the most natural talents I've seen in quite some time, and that makes me consider *Rum Lad* more a graphic novelette than an illustrated zine. The drawings are just too good. In his hand-written writing, Steve comes across as an extremely likable guy, lighthearted enough to share long conversations on busses with strangers (and self-confident enough to let it be what it was: a conversation), who mistrusts fairground rides ("there has to be a couple nuts and bolts that get misplaced in the process"), and considers squirrels friends on a trip to a graveyard. This is all very approachable and kind. But *Rum Lad*'s not merely a skip through daffodils. Steve also takes time to consider the big picture of life: its transience, his place in it, and how to avoid becoming "comfortably miserable." If you're looking for a fresh voice that is at the age where an author could easily roll out a barrel of "back in the day" and get drunk on their own long-fermented memories, but doesn't, this is worth tracking down. Fantastic and hopeful. –Todd (Steve Larder, Somerset House, Cherry Holt Lane, Sutterton, Boston, Lincolnshire, PE20 2HU, England)

SCENE NOT HERD #2, $4, 8 ½" x 11" 52 pgs. + CD-R
Another relatively new zine, this time from Washington State. It seems to focus on a lot of pop punk, but I feel like that I'm selling someone short (there's mention of a lot of poppier bands, but it's not like it's all Lookout! wannabe-types). There's some stuff I've heard before ("Mall punk is bad! DIY is good!"), but there's some bands I hadn't heard about before (like Streetside Prophet), and some other bands I know of that I'm happily

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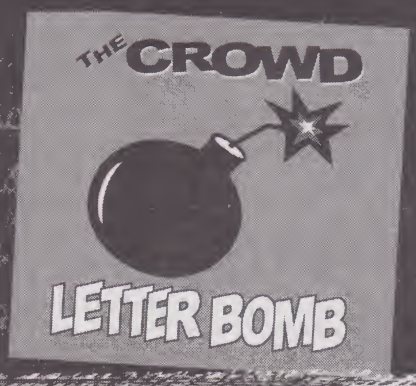

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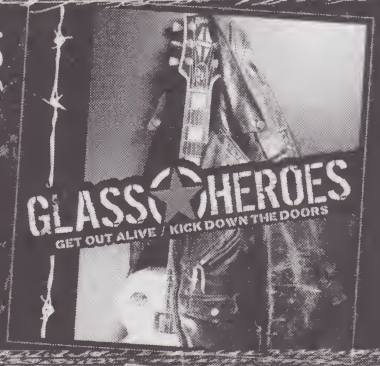

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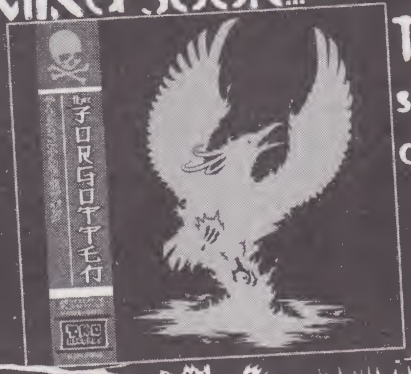

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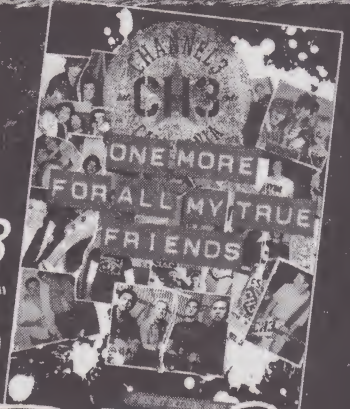

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surprised to see mentioned (like The Steinways), plus I like some of the columnists' spunk. The bonus CD-R comp included makes this a strong effort worth looking into (though I must say, it's okay that The Modern Machines aren't the second coming of Screeching Weasel). –Joe Evans III (Eric Hazen, 1623 8th Ave., Apt. 2, Longview, WA 98632)

"coffee, crushes, and Jawbreaker lyrics"

THOUGHTWORM #14, $3,
4" x 5", copied, ? pgs.
Writer's block. If you're a zinester and you haven't had it, you must not have been doing zines for too long. Issue 14 of *Thoughtworm* deals primarily with said issue and Sean's attempts to fight through it. The writing is journal-like and stream of consciousness, focusing on the minute details of the day as well as interpretations of the bigger picture issues (Why are we getting up in the morning? Why can't I shake this feeling of _____?). I could relate with much of what was written: the ideas, the questions, the concerns, and viewpoints of this guy living in Baltimore. And, in one sense, that scared me. There's no romanticizing of the life he leads. It's as dull as mine. There are no trysts, accidents of a monumental kind, death, life-altering encounters or anything of the sort. Honestly, it makes me recall my own zine and the standard fare that I all too often deliver in it (although I'm working on getting past that). So, in one sense, I was creeped out, but in another sense it felt comfortable. Although this seemed a peg below the last issue, it was still an interesting look at working through writer's block in all of its minutiae and angles. –Kurt Morris (Sean Stewart, PO Box 5318, Baltimore, MD 21209)

TRAINWRECK #2 / CULTURE BOMB #3, $2 or trade,
5½" x 8½", copied, 30 pgs.
Hate to sound like an ageist prick, but I'm pissed off. Actually, I guess jealousy's the more accurate term. Both of these guys are super young (this split was written while they were both seniors in high school) and they're already showcasing that kind of raw, yet-to-be-totally-cultivated writing talent that still manages to jump and sing around like a motherfucker. While some of the writing's still a bit too mired in the "coffee, crushes, and Jawbreaker lyrics" camp for me, there's no denying the fact that they're both pulling off some decent, thoughtful work within the scope of the "personal zine." What I mean to say is I wish I had been half as good a writer at eighteen as they both obviously are. Let's hope they both manage to stick with it and keep writing; it'd be a shame if they became two of the many people around who can admit to nothing more than doing a few zines in high school and then moving on to greener, less literary pastures. Keep going. –Keith Rosson (Dave, 7827 Westwood Ln., Mercer Island, WA 98040)

ZISK #15, $2, 7" x 8 ½",
photocopied, 30 pgs.
Yay! I'm not into baseball *at all* (in fact, I consider it to be perhaps the most boring sport, second only to bowling, if that can be considered a sport), but I love the idea of punks doing a really, really geeky sports zine. Of course, I wish it was about the Green Bay Packers, but that's just me. Interviews with a buncha folks (*The Baseball Economist* author JC Bradbury, ESPN's Tim Kurkjian), an article entitled, "Ten Cultural Observations While Sitting in the Right Field Corner of the Tokyo Dome During a Yomiyuri Giants Game This Past July, Or Why Billy Beane Will Never Hire a Manager from the Japanese League," and more! If you like baseball, you'd have to be silly not to pick this up! –Maddy (Zisk, 801 Eagles Ridge Rd., Brewster, NY 10509)

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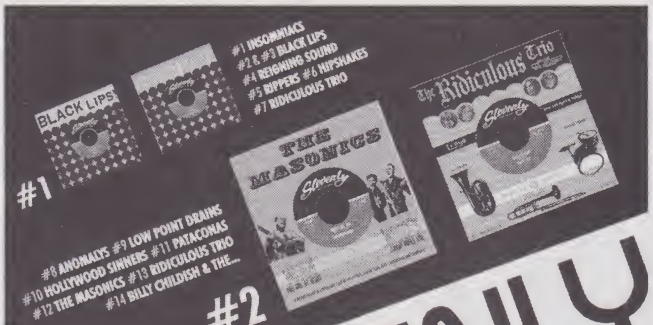

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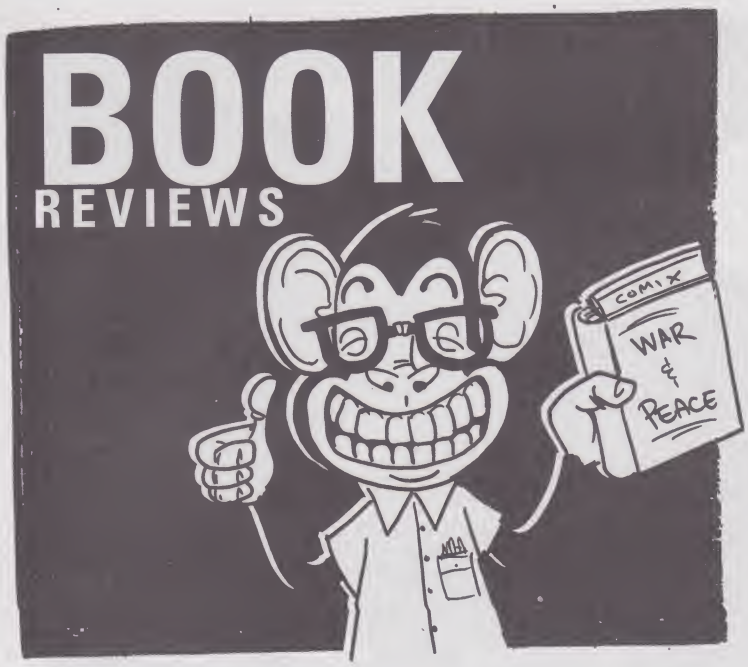

As the World Burns: 50 Simple Things You Can Do to Stay in Denial
By Derrick Jensen and Stephanie McMillan, 220 pgs.

This graphic novel is all about the environment and how we humans interact with it, but it is not the typical lightweight faire. This is hardcore environmentalist material, scoffing off efforts such as recycling and solar power. If you're not a radical, these guys do not approve. This is an angry and unapologetic book that shuts down all those who do not think in line with the protagonist and her friends. At the same time, the style of drawing is very cutesy with characters looking, at times, like they came straight off a lunchbox. This makes me wonder who they want for an audience. Aliens, politicians, activists, hippies, businessmen, and nature are all represented in caricature, and the subject matter turns quickly from dismissing popular current half-assed "green" ideas to suggesting some fairly extreme action. This book reads like propaganda at times, and while I think it makes some decent points on our current state and the whole hipness of going "green," the calls to violence are unnecessary and a little frightening. –Will Kwiatkowski (Seven Stories Press, 140 Watts St., New York, NY, 10013)

Diary of Indignities
By Patrick Hughes, 256 pgs.

Patrick Hughes has written what may very well be the funniest book I have ever read in my life. This is no hyperbole, either. I have spent the last several lunch hours in various fast food locations nearly choking on bad food while reading *Diary of Indignities*. This book is a collection of stories from the blog posts of Patrick Hughes called badnewshughes.blogspot.com. These stories cover a long range of years from early childhood through the early teen days of discovering punk rock and schooling other kids about how to make a correct homemade circle 'A' anarchy T-shirt for which he apologizes with the potato chip-choking funny line, "Mike, I'm here to tell you today that I'm ashamed. A blue terry cloth shirt with a giant, glittery gold anarchy symbol on it is, in fact, the punkest thing in the entire universe." I nearly choked on a potato chip while reading that very line. The book is full of line after line of the funniest stuff I have ever read.

It hit me recently that this book is really the punk rock version of Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs* or a very dark *Wonder Years*. In fact, I dream of the day when I can rent a movie or watch a TV show that is this funny. I have found myself out of breath, gasping for air from laughter reading these stories. Not only are these stories funny situations, but are written in such an amazingly wonderful rant style that I was sad as I would turn each page, knowing I was that much closer to reading the last story.

This book also rings true in ways that I didn't truly expect. In the descriptions of hanging out with a group of skinheads on a road trip for beer with some weird farmer-looking kid who just sort of latched on to the crowd was so familiar to me. It just all rang so true. But even if you don't have those same feelings of déjà vu, you can't deny the great writing and dark, dark humor.

Go out today, online, or wherever you buy books, and get two copies of *Diary of Indignities*, because I guarantee you will want to give someone a copy of this book after you read the first story called "Kiss Me, You Retard" that starts with the line, "Oh, I just remembered—one time I made out with this retarded kid in church." –Tim Jamison (M Press, 10956 SE Main, Milwaukie, OR 97222, mpressbooks.com)

Natural Disaster
By Al Burian, 273 pgs.

This book is a collection of issues 10-13 of Al Burian's popular zine *Burn Collector*, as well as the first two installments of *Natural Disaster*. The book seems to retain much of the original presentation of the zines—typos, odd spacing, and all that—but it doesn't hurt the read. Burian jumps back and forth through time, essentially just living life for the rest of us to read. He bums around Europe, gets fired from a video store, and lets the ghosts of girlfriends past eat away at his mind. There isn't much here that couldn't have happened to anyone else, but that's the charm of the stories. Burian personalizes the universal and, while we always know that the stories are set around him, it is always relatable. –Liz Ohanesian (Stickfigure, PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA, 30308)

Official Book of Punk Rock Lists, The
By Amy Wallace and Handsome Dick Manitoba, 316 pgs.

Slagging down this book would be like shooting at ducks in a teacup. Some of the info is of dubious accuracy (I wish I had a dollar for every misnamed song title, information repeated from one list to the next, and the variations of said information provided) and questionable judgment (okay, I can understand the inclusion of Nirvana, but can someone please explain when Pearl Jam became a punk band? Yeah, I know all about the Deranged Diction ties, but there is a veritable gulf between screaming "Don't eat aspirin" and singing duets with Neil Young. And while we're at it, how about replacing Peter "Midnight Oil" Garret with 4-Way from Bad Posture/ Suicide Kings on the list of "Very Tall Punks"?). Still, it's not without its charms: despite its bulky 300+ pages, it's an easy read, and much of it is filled with the kind of low-brow silliness and faux-stupidity that made the Ramones and *Punk Magazine* such a hoot. More importantly, parts of it are really fuckin' funny, like "Steve Soto's Ten Things I Learned Playing in the Adolescents that I Never Would Have Learned in High School," and "Tony Cocaine's Top 5 Tips for Punk Parenting," the latter of which includes "Wear tie dye when you yell at them so they learn to hate hippies." In addition to these, you'll find lists of who has died and how, top songs about pills, who served as altar boys, disgusting burgers one can eat while on tour, ridiculous punk names, people Debbie Harry would like to fuck, punk's literary geniuses, and much more. Is it essential reading? Hardly, but it is a fun enough read to warrant a hallowed, quick access spot on top of the john when Dostoevsky is just too fuckin' heady for the task at hand. –Jimmy Alvarado (www.backbeatbooks.com)

Sunday Afternoon Hotdog Meal, A: A Guide to Chicago Featuring Shrimp from the Future, a Park Shaped Like a Spot of Paint, Six-Foot Tall Smelly, Sweaty Men, ... and Cabs That Smell Like Fresh Flowers.
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I have been to Chicago once; we made a wrong turn and the police escorted us out of a "rough" neighborhood in the late evening with our two wide-eyed sons (Todd was three and Andy was five) in the back seat. After that, I never really wanted to revisit the city. Times have changed and if I go, I'm taking this book with me so I can tell my husband where to go.

A blue terry cloth shirt with a giant, glittery gold anarchy symbol on it is, in fact, the punkest thing in the entire universe.

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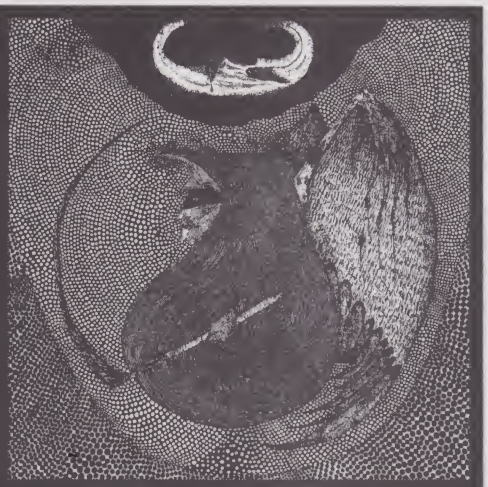

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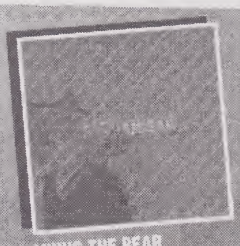

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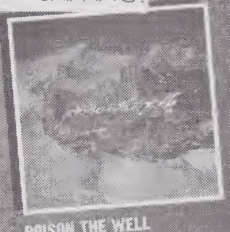

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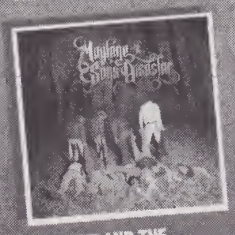

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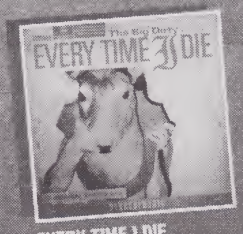

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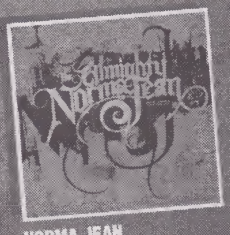

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NEW RELEASES FROM VINYL COLLECTIVE

If you're not a radical, these guys do not approve.

The child authors wrote about of points of interest, including the Adler Planetarium ("it is dark and can give you a creepy feeling"), the Chicago Cultural Center ("bring food, a camera, and a backpack in case of emergency"), City Hall (wear nice clothes and have an ID), the Lincoln Park Zoo (it's free and the monkeys are human-like), Sears Tower (both scary and amazing), and The Shedd Aquarium ("smells fishy").

There is a restaurant review section, and Karen's bottom line is "When you come to Chicago if you are starving, don't panic!"

If I go in the winter, I'll follow Santiago's advice to "wear a huge jacket, a warm hat to keep your ears warm, and a scarf. Sometimes the scarf chokes you, so don't put your scarf on too tight." Alexis recommends going ice skating in the winter, not in the summer.

Thanks to Melodi, I know about Chicago taxis: "A taxi can smell either like rotten fish, wet dog, or fresh flowers, and sometime all three at the same time." While Jocelyne wisely advises: "If you do not have money, you should have walked."

The book devotes a section about its authors. For instance, "Cynthia's mom is going to have a baby soon and Cynthia is pretty sure it will be a boy." "Jamell refuses to eat black-eyed peas, which he claims are nasty, even though he has never eaten one." "Henry likes bugs even though everybody else hates them. He saves every bug he can. He once saved a water bug that was drowning."

This entertaining and informative book is a result of 826CHI, which is a non-profit that supports children with their writing skills and helps teachers inspire their students to write. It achieved its goal with this book. –Todd's Mom (www.826chi.org)

Briefs, The: The Greatest Story Ever Told: DVD

So, apparently, the new hip trend for reviews is to send DVDs on plastic cards, not actual DVD discs that you can play in a DVD player. The fancy plastic card has The Briefs press shot on one side and on the other side there is a code that gives you access to download the video off the web. At first I thought it was a pretty novel idea, but I remembered how old-fashioned and picky I am when I went to watch the DVD. I first thought you could access the video and stream it on the Internet, no issue. But then I realized that I had to download the huge file on to my already cluttered computer. Not something I wanted to do. So after it took forever to download on my computer I was able to watch it. Next issue was that I don't really like watching movies on my PC. I'd rather watch movies on a big TV screen. Also, the movie was grainy on my computer. I feel slighted because I don't think I got to enjoy this movie to its utmost degree.

But as far as the documentary goes, it kicked booty. The Briefs are one of my favorite bands, so I am partial. But it was nice to get some more back story to their journey as a band. The documentary starts off with how they met and started a band. It does not do the whole back story on where they grew up and what they were like as kids, but I guess it was nice to stay focused and talk about their lives since the formation of the Briefs.

The documentary includes interviews with the whole band, to give a comprehensive tale of what has happened thus far. The most interesting parts are when they talk about signing to a major label, their journey, and eventual uneasy time with it. And fans also get to hear the story on why Mr. Lance Romance left the band. It's nice to hear about it directly from the band. They do, however, splice him leaving the band with footage of a funeral procession. It was hard to tell if they were making fun of him or if they just thought it was funny to add an extra level of drama. The only thing is that when Lance talks about leaving the band, they say he had a lot of "responsibilities" to take care of. I thought they should have just been a little more descriptive about it. If you choose to make a documentary about your band, then you should be willing to spill some of the beans. But I guess that's just because I'm a nosy jerk. But still, it was very interesting to hear the story. Gotta love band drama; it's like watching a soap opera with dudes who are dirty, drunken slobs with guitars, and live in vans.

The movie was cool. I just wish I could put the DVD in my movie collection… But the documentary has lots of live footage, good interviews, and good stories from other people who know the band. The funniest part is the end of the movie when their tour manager, Falcon, looks like he's on acid and talks about being a dog and eating shit. It's a worthy purchase. –Jenny Moncayo (BYO, PO Box 67609, LA, CA 90067)

Jesus Lizard, The: DVD

What do we have here? Early/mid-'90s concert footage of the Kings of Dog Food Punk, The Jesus Lizard, and you don't once get to see David Yow pull out his junk and tie it all up into a miniature manger scene? I'm not sure if I'm relieved or feel cheated. I mean this guy is the Jim Henson of penis puppetry. A real pioneer. Long before this kind of puppetry became fashionable "blue" entertainment for the swanky Theatre Crowd, Yow was slugging it out with his own flesh while writing the book on pudenda origami, creating beloved pubic-haired artwork like the famous "Tight and Shiny" and "Ronald Reagan Eating Plumbs." I guess it's plausible that after so many years of stretching and pulling the shit out of your Joe Camel that it eventually wears out like the elastic band on a really old pair of underpants. I can't really say; maybe Mr. Lifto might know something about that. But this footage was filmed back in Yow's (and the band's) prime. I witnessed him do it myself back then and it was something I someday hoped to tell my grandkids about. Obviously, when that day comes, this particular DVD will be of no help backing up my outlandish claims. Oh well.

On the bright side, what you do get here are a couple classic-era performances—the main one from Boston in '94, the other from CBGB's in '92— from a band known to blast canisters of mayhem off in their audience's faces on a nightly basis. When, as in these shows, Yow wasn't playing Bert and Ernie with his dangly bits, he would launch himself with malicious disregard for life and limb like a meat salvo into the audience, oftentimes resulting in a bloody fracas. And the music was always gritty, demonic, tight, and angular. Kind of like the aural equivalent of having your face jammed into a pile of broken antlers, dog teeth, and shattered glass while some demented nutjob (aka: Yow) howled discordantly in the background. That, my children, was good stuff—*and still is*— penis puppetry or not. It was a heaving, inhuman nightmare that raked like steel wool through your brain and could, at anytime it wanted to, snap your ribs like pretzel sticks. Simply put, it was a good time to be alive and into antisocial music.

And now you, those too late out of the womb to have experienced it firsthand, can see it for yourself on this DVD. Now, presumably, so you youngins don't have bad dreams about the scary man David Yow, they've

included a somewhat tucked-away *Hype TV* interview with the frontman wherein he shows a more sedate, socially acceptable side of his personality. Whether this "Regular Joe" bit is an affectation or not, I don't know, but the famous sociopath comes off as mild mannered and accommodating while disdainfully comparing Green Day to The Knack and expressing a desire to feed Billie Joe and the boys a knuckle sandwich or two. Good stuff all around. Longtime fans will find little here to be disappointed with—if you can get over the conspicuous absence of Yow's "Hairy Tangerine," that is. But for you newbies: whether you missed The Jesus Lizard when they were still performing their ghastly musical exorcisms from town to town, or you just feel like having your tongue blown back down your throat and your spine rattled in an unholy way, this DVD is your chance. And for all we know, your last chance. Don't miss it. And turn it up *loud*, dammit. –Aphid Peewit (MVD Visual, PO Box 280, Oaks, PA 19456, www.mvdvisual.com)

Mentors, The: El Duce Vita: DVD

I suppose all that's safe to say about the Mentors anymore is that, like jenkem, they are 1) malodorous, and 2) not for everyone. Jenkem, in case you're not up-to-speed on your cutting edge homemade intoxicants, is a hair-raising, brain-baking inhalant made by fermenting human waste (numbers one and two) in a glass jug in the sun and catching the fumes in an attached balloon. The few chucklefucks, who have the proper paucity of brain cells to actually undertake huffing said fumes, get most of those same neurons vaporized in a psychotic flurry of hallucinations and a numbing, drooling dementia that allegedly can go on for days. And just in case you're prone to believing that Homo Sapiens have just now reached a point in their evolution where they've realized that they can get a killer buzz off of the stuff that comes out of their own nether regions—for free!— it might interest you to know that many jenkem huffers report dramatic out-of-body experiences in which they float like a jellyfish up to the astral plane, where they meet long-dead relatives and tell them about what's happened on Earth since they died. For example, they might tell them about the recent infestation of our pop culture by things like rampant reality TV shows, around-the-clock Britney "news" coverage, and the proliferation of the (i)Pod People. But I digress.

Also similar to the Mentors, jenkem is believed to be the real deal by some and a crock of shit by others. (Sorry for the pun.) But while jenkem might be just urban legend, the Mentors are now simply legendary. And if you've ever heard them and / or heard anything about them, you probably already have an opinion about them. Which means that pretty much no one—pro-Mentors or anti-Mentors—will be surprised by what is found in gratuitous abundance in the "music videos" collected together on *El Duce Vita*. Put pig-simple, this is *Men Behaving Very Badly*, the graduate level course. In other words, it is a white trash man-beast bacchanalia, a testicular fantasy land dreamt to life by rutting, beer-bellied slobs in executioner's hoods. Visually, it is a feast of perverted monkeyshines where various jams and salsas and syrups from Sickie Wifebeater's Mom's refrigerator transmogrify into bodily things like ejaculate, menstrual blood, and the stuff they make jenkem out of. Summed up, it is a juvenile acting out of El Duce's most infamous lyrical coprolalia. Now, before you are too quick to condemn it as low-brow, outsider art, let me remind you that Mozart himself was fond of composing ditties laced with scatological humor and, in fact, once wrote a song called "Lick Out My Asshole." I'm not making that up. And if an ultra-respectable, powdered-wig-wearing highbrow like Mozart was capable of such tawdry indulgences, maybe we all need to cut the Mentors a bit more slack. Besides, I'll be damned if songs like "Peeping Tom" and "Sandwich of Love" aren't catchy little numbers that can get the toes of even the most uptight Tipper-wannabe a-tappin'.

Yeah, it's schlocky and can be easily perceived as degrading to women, but it's really nothing more than an *Itchy & Scratchy* cartoon for grown-ups, whatever those are. So loosen up your morality girdles, kick back, and enjoy this smörgåsbord of utter tastelessness. There's nudity! There's heavy metal! There's the late Eldon Hoke, the legendary King of the Smut Hoboes! Yep, it's pretty much all here: bad dancing, crummy lip-syncing, cheesy special effects, and laughable '80s-style video camera work. With some bonus live stuff thrown in, to boot. A genuine slobberknocker of depravity, one sure to elicit both hoots of hilarity and teeth-gnashing consternation in spades. If there ever was another rock'n'roll DVD that serves as a better excuse to suck down a balloon-full of jenkem, I'd like to see it. –Aphid Peewit (MVD Visual, PO Box 280, Oaks, PA 19456, www.mvdvisual.com)

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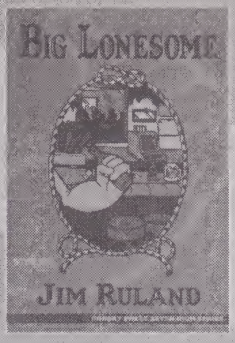

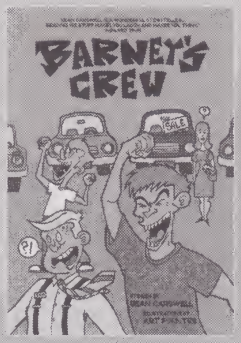

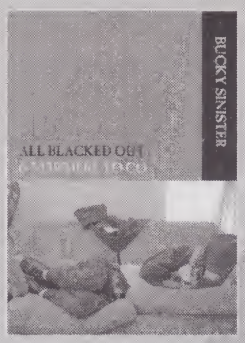

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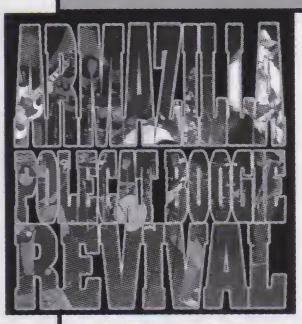

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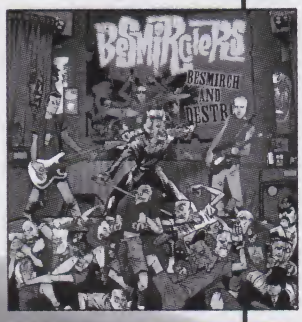

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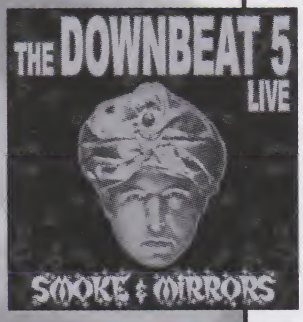

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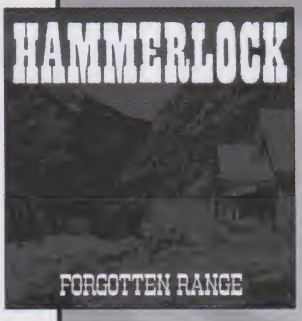

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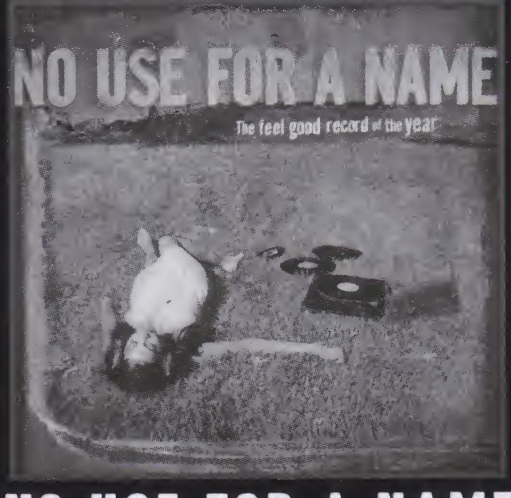

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